

SPECIAL
REPORT

"DEATH TO EMOS!" INSIDE MEXICO'S
PUNK RIOTS

SPIN

THE
TING
TINGS

JAY-Z

THE RACONTEURS
THE ROOTS JAMIE LIDELL
LIL MAMA



HOT FUZZ!

THE POWER-POP POOBAHS
LET THEIR HAIR DOWN

BY STEVE KANDELL

PHOTOS BY SASHA EISENMAN

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A HYBRID
CAR!

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ECO-CHALLENGE

DETAILS ON
PAGE 28



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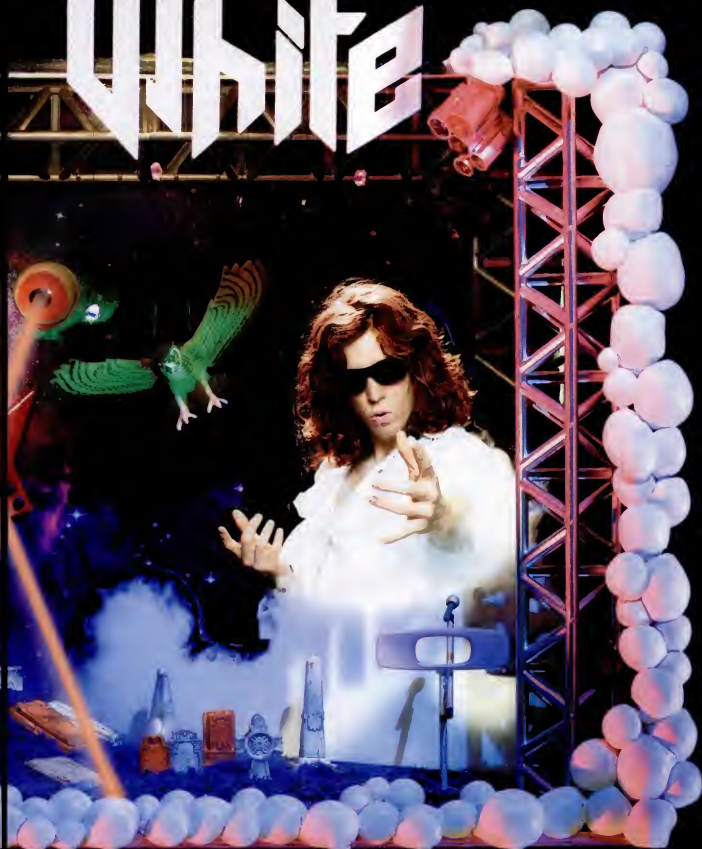


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FEATURES

60 Weezer

Thanks to a renewed sense of cooperation and some good old-fashioned marital relations, the forever youngish kings of power pop get back their mojo.

BY STEVE KANDELL

68 Special Report: Mexico's Emo Riots

This spring, gangs of punks and metalheads poured onto the streets of major Mexican cities to pummel emo kids. Is it just a case of cliquish rivalry, or do these bullies have a more sinister M.O.? BY JOSEPH CONTRERAS

74 "Y.M.C.A."

In 1978, the Village People turned gay cruising into a song so catchy that no one, not even the grounds crew at Yankee Stadium, bothered to question its meaning. The oral history of the original boy-toy band's crowning achievement.

BY JEFF PEARLMAN

80 Jamie Lidell

A cape-wearing electro maverick skips town for love, flirts with decadence, and finds his soulful inner Jim. BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

82 The Spin Interview: ?uestlove

With controversy already brewing over the Roots' latest album, *Recovery*, ?uestlove describes the hard work (thanks, Dad), luck, and generous recording advance that helped a live drummer make it in a digital world.

BY CHARLES AARON

90 SXSW Photo Gallery

A colorful look at the artists who caused a scene at Austin, Texas' storied (and chaotic) festival of new music. PHOTOGRAPHS BY BLOSSOM BERKOFKY

96 Philip Glass

No living classical composer is more famous or more important to rock music. Here's how the maestro of minimalism continues to inspire new generations. BY WILL HERMES

"We're probably more popular now than ever. We're neither here nor there; we have our own universe."

WEezer's STEVE KANDELL PAGES 60

ON THE COVER

Photographed exclusively for Spin by Sasha Eisenman

Styling by Houston Sams. Grooming by Raina Antle for Exclusive Artists Management. Set design by Kasia Lennox for Frank Regis. From left, on Brian Bell: Thom Browne jacket, thombrowne.com; Band of Outsiders shirt and tie, bandofoutsiders.com; Juicy Couture for Men shorts, juicycouture.com. On Rivers Cuomo: Thom Browne jacket, band of Outsiders shirt and tie, Steven Alan shorts, stevenalan.com. Original Penguin t-shirt, originalpenguin.com. On Scott Shriner: Band of Outsiders t-shirt, Converse by John Varvatos shirt, converse.com. On Patrick Wilson: Juicy Couture for Men jacket and shorts, Whitehouse Couture T-shirt, whitehousecouture.com.

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to be continued.... log onto stonetemplepilots.com for news and information

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5
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DEPARTMENTS

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Pop stars invade Kuwait; Disturbed's unlikely fans; celebs chime in on the bands that jacked their names; *The Wackness*' Olivia Thurby on Joanna Newsom and *Happy Gilmore*; Columbus, Ohio's burgeoning shitgaze scene; sneaking into Lil Mama's Brooklyn bedroom; Neil Diamond faces the Inquisition, abuses the third person; the Honor Roll. **PLUS:** The Chapin Sisters, the Ting Tings, and the Little Ones are Breaking Out.

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Keith Richards, my buddy, my pal. BY MIKE EDSON

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This best of the summer's movie/game tie-ins.

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"There's something healing about taking the darkest s---t inside you and putting it in a pretty package."

THE CHAPIN SISTERS
JESSICA CRAVEN, PAGE 35





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"[Jimmy Eat World] conjure that shock of near-bubblegum catchiness, airtight ensemble attack and bittersweet mingling of anguish and uplifting melody."

— ROLLING STONE LEAD REVIEW OF
BLEED AMERICAN, AUG. 16, 2001

"An eclectic sonic feast (Album of the week)"
— PEOPLE, AUGUST 6, 2001

"Tuneful, retro alt-rock — Brilliant!"
— BLENDER, BEST OF 2001

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INSIDE SPIN CONTRIBUTORS



Sasha Eisenman

Photographer, Weezer (page 60)

↑ At this month's cover shoot, Eisenman caught the band having a little too much fun with the props: "Weezer really enjoyed the Rascal scooters they were driving down the boardwalk—several attempts were made to catch air off curbs at seriously slow speeds." The Californian has also shot for I-D, V, and British Elle. **Favorite Weezer song:** "Hash Pipe"



Jeff Pearlman

Writer, "Y.M.C.A." oral history (page 74)

← Pearlman admits that as a child he didn't grasp the homoerotic content of the Village People: "I thought they really were blue-collar workers who loved singing." A columnist at ESPN.com, he is the author of *Boys Will Be Boys: The Glory Days and Party Nights of the Dallas Cowboys Dynasty*, out in August. **Favorite disco song:** "I Was Made for Lovin' You," by Kiss

Blossom Berkofsky

Photographer, SXSW photo gallery (page 90)

→ "It was my first time at South by Southwest, but I will definitely be going back next year," the 33-year-old Berkofsky says. "The highlight was seeing X at the Spin party. They were so good, it felt like 1990 again!" The London native and Brooklyn resident also shoots for Nylon, Vice, and Dazed & Confused. **Favorite bands at SXSW:** N.E.R.D. and the Raveonettes



Joseph Contreras

Writer, Mexico's emo riots (page 68)

← "I found myself identifying with the emos up to a point," says Contreras, *Newsweek's* Latin America regional editor. "But I could never picture myself at their age getting so thoroughly immersed in their chosen subculture. It all seems a bit too self-referential." **First concert:** Creedence Clearwater Revival, 1970



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A man in a top hat, sunglasses, and a tuxedo stands in a field, holding a cane in his right hand and a large balloon in his left. He is wearing a light-colored tuxedo jacket over a dark vest and a white shirt with a bow tie. The background shows a white tent with a red top and a cloudy sky.

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Code Monkeys returns to G4

Code Monkeys, the critically acclaimed hit show *Wired Magazine* hails as "veering into the wildly surreal," returns to G4 with an all new season. This smash hit comedy of 8-bit proportions comes from one of the twisted minds behind Crank Yankers and the creator of Minoriteam. Code Monkeys,

Season 2 premieres June 1st 7PM ET.

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www.g4tv.com/codemonkeys



The Honda Civic Tour

The Honda Civic Tour—a national music concert tour offering a chance to win a Honda Civic Hybrid customized and autographed by the headlining act—kicks off its eighth year this spring with platinum-selling band Panic! At The Disco along for the ride.

www.hondacivictour.com

Rivers Cuomo reveals an incredible guitar string in 1986.



The "Buddy Holly" Story

SOMETIMES WHEN PEOPLE LEARN that I edit a music magazine, they want to know what I most like to listen to. The first answer I give them is "Everything" (which is true). After their fifth "No, really," I say that's like asking which of my two French bulldogs is my favorite. But then I usually relent and say, "Okay, stuff with heavy guitars, hummable melodies, and insidious choruses." Power pop, if we have to put a label on it—what the likes of Cheap Trick, XTC, Fountains of Wayne, the New Pornographers, and Switches have trafficked in so wonderfully. And few bands have done more to reconnect this perennially unfashionable subgenre to the mainstream than Weezer, whose mastery of the offbeat sing-along (go play "Buddy Holly" or "Dope Nose" right now) has made them arena-filling modern-rock superstars. For this month's cover story, *Spin* deputy editor Steve Kandell hit Weezer's home turf in L.A. to get the inside story on their new album and to revisit with frontman Rivers Cuomo, whose music seems to be getting stranger as his personal life gets, relatively speaking, more normal.

This rest of the issue offers a little bit of everything else. Veteran *Newsweek* editor Joseph Contreras reports from Mexico on the recent wave of violence that has struck the emo community there. Will Hermes spends time with influential composer Philip Glass, while *Spin* music editor Charles Aaron grills the Roots' outspoken drummer, Questlove. And what is it about the letters Y, M, C, and A that makes a stadium full of baseball fans—or a lido deck full of senior citizens, for that matter—break out in a semaphor-style dance? Sports writer Jeff Pearlman discovers the answer in his hilarious oral history of the Village People's wildly misunderstood 1978 hit.

Hope you enjoy the issue.

Doug Brod

Doug Brod
Editor

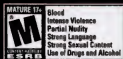


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SPIN FLASH

[1] Steve Aoki & Kanye West



[2] Kanye West of Justice

MySpace Music Tour Afterparty Los Angeles, CA March 31, 2008

After setting out multiple venues on their 20-city trek, the Spring 2008 MySpace Music Tour, featuring Justice, presented by Discover Card and sponsored by SPIN, came to an exciting close at Los Angeles's Mayan Theatre. The show was followed by a star-studded after party at Les Deux.

WHO

Steve Aoki and Justice DJed the afterparty where guests like Kanye West and Hisha Barton made appearances.



INSIDE SPIN

PUBLISHER'S LETTER



Goal!

WE HAVE A LOT TO BE EXCITED ABOUT at *Spin*. Over the past few months, we've introduced a digital edition of the magazine in partnership with MySpace Music (you can find it at digital.spin.com), relaunched *SPIN.com*, and archived all 550 new CD reviews from 2007 in a special interactive compendium (digital.spin.com/spin/annualreview07). We continue to be a part of all the major music festivals, and the magazine is as vibrant and insightful as ever. And on top of all that, we can brag about our foray into semi-amateur sports. I'd like to congratulate our *Spin* hockey team in Austin, Texas, for winning the B2 division. Not only did they dominate on the ice, but they looked good doing it.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank a few people who have helped *Spin* this year. Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to: Carleen Donovan, Scott McNameey, E. Vizion Jones, Isaac Walter, Kelley Electra, Dana Dynamite, Joseph Janus, Annabel Lukins, Keith Pressman, Jerry Pressman, Kenneth Loo, Shannon Woodward, Rob Tonkin, Lexa Carey, Sean Dee, Brian Pekny, Meredith Miesieski, Tom Bacon, Campbell Brown, Herb Heneman, Dyana Kass, Greg Galbraith, Taku, Ian Toombs, Bob Woody, and Allison Spagle.

—Malcolm Campbell
Publisher

WIN A CAR!

Enter the Honda Civic Tour Panic at the Disco Eco-Challenge and Win a 2008 Honda Civic Hybrid!



Spin and Alpine Mobile Media Solutions have joined the 2008 Honda Civic Tour featuring Panic at the Disco and the non-profit organizations Reverb and Global Inheritance for a one-of-a-kind contest. A portion of every Honda Civic Tour ticket sold is going into a special eco-fund, and you may decide how to spend it.

HOW IT WORKS: Upload a photo of yourself (optional) and submit a brief essay explaining where you think that money should go. It could be an established environmental organization, a local tree-planting initiative, or even your own eco-friendly invention. Three finalists will be selected by Reverb, Global Inheritance, and *Spin*; the ultimate winner will be chosen by the members of Panic at the Disco. The winning submission will receive an endorsement from the eco-fund. In addition, whoever dreams up that planet-saving brainstorm will get a brand-new, fuel-efficient Honda Civic Hybrid (ARV \$25,000).

To enter and for more on the contest's rules, go to spin.com/ecocontest.



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MANCHESTER ACADEMY, MANCHESTER, ENGLAND

We Are Scientists

Tuesday, April 15, 2008

"Tea parties and projectiles." That's how singer/guitarist Keith Murray sums up this particular night. "Before the show, I stood around eating cake with fans. But as soon as I got onstage, someone threw a sneaker that hit me right in the chest," he says. Don't get the wrong idea, though. "If they throw something at you in Manchester, it means they like you. I look at my bruise with pride."

PHOTOGRAPH BY DANNY NORTH







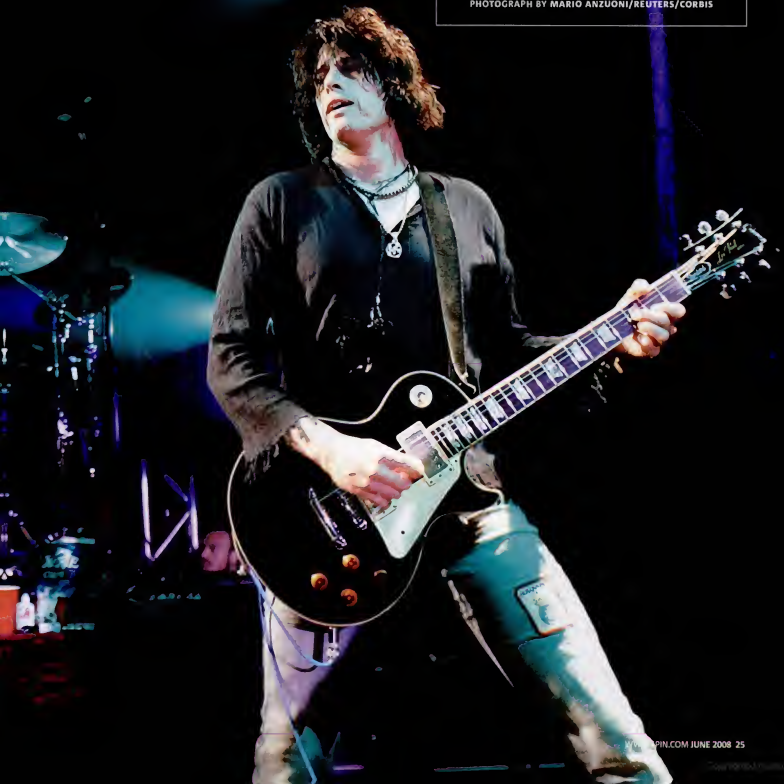
THE HARRY HOUDINI ESTATE, LOS ANGELES

Stone Temple Pilots

Monday, April 7, 2008

For STP guitarist Dean DeLeo, the prospect of reuniting with his old bandmates wasn't entirely free of headaches. "Once word got around that we were getting back together, the bean counters started lining up," he says. "You could see the dollar signs flashing in their eyes." But all that disappeared when the group played their first gig in six years. "From the first chord to the last, it was so easy. Playing with these guys feels like going home."

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIO ANZUONI/REUTERS/CORBIS







LO-FI SOCIAL CLUB, BALTIMORE

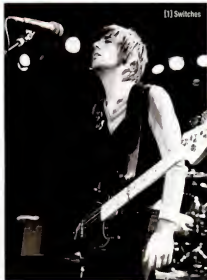
The Death Set

Thursday, March 27, 2008

For Death Set singer Johnny Sierra, this hometown show satisfied the three criteria for a "bonkers night": "It was in a small space, it was all-ages, and it was full of nerds." Wait—one of those things is not like the others. "Yeah, but I mean nerdy in the best possible way," says Sierra. "Nerds are people who aren't afraid to spaz out. They're the ones who made that show so rad."

PHOTOGRAPH BY FRANK HAMILTON

SPIN FLASH



[1] Switches

Switches Album Release Party West Hollywood, CA

Switches had their official album release party, hosted by SPIN and K-Swiss at West Hollywood's Roxy Theater, for *Lay Down the Law*, their first full-length released on Interscope Records.

WHO

Castledor, Glacier Hiking, and DJ Hyphy Crunk also performed throughout the night to celebrate the release.

K-Swiss Pop Up Store Santa Monica, CA

WHO

Carina Round showed up at the K-Swiss store in Santa Monica to treat shoppers with a surprise acoustic performance.

WHO

Shoppers, employees, and fans enjoyed the sultry songstress' set while sipping on complimentary cocktails.



[4] Carina Round



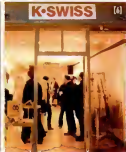
[2] Switches



[3]



[5] Switches



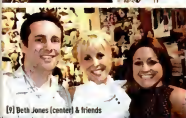
[6]

Quiksilver siteLA Launch Silver Lake, CA March 6, 2008

To introduce their new collection for women, Quiksilver selected six independent and creative women to be "Visionaries in Residence" at siteLA, a creative work and exhibition space in Los Angeles.

WHO

The six residents, Beth Jones, Sarah Anderson, Pilar Diaz, Dorothy Le, Jesse Rodato, and Khrysstine Zurian celebrated with friends, family and fans.



[V] Beth Jones (center) & friends



[VI]



[10]



[11]



[12]



[13] DJ Albert Hammond, Jr.

RADAR Plugs In New York, NY March 20, 2008

RADAR Entertainment celebrated the launch of its new luxury fashion division at the exclusive SoHo bar, subMercer.

WHO

Fabrizio Moretti, Mark Ronson, Charlotte Ronson, Genevieve Jones, Byrdie Bell, Marina Tamar, Ed Westwick, Alexander Wang, and Leven Rambea partied while DJ Albert Hammond, Jr. kept the dance-grooves going.



[14] Mark Ronson



[15]



[16]

FLASH CORRECTION: PHOTOGRAPHY'S CREDIT FOR THE ACTRESS DEVI PICTURE IN THE "SPIN'S YEAR IN MUSIC" FLASH ITEM ON PAGE 107 IN APRIL 2008 SHOULD HAVE BEEN JACKIE ROMAN. THE CORRECT NAME FOR THE WOMAN PHOTO ON PAGE 102 IN APRIL 2008 SHOULD BE CREDITED AS PARKER DISNEY.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROB SHAWMAN (1, 4, 11), JASON VAUGHN (1, 2, 5), HARRISWORTH PHOTOGRAPHY (7-11), PHILIP ANGELOTT (12-14)

WHEN YOU SEE THE BEACHES OF BRAZIL,
YOU'LL WISH YOU WERE LIKE THE SUN,
AND COULD STAY ALL YEAR LONG.



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1 Lily Allen "I COULD SAY" Nothing says touching ballad like a monied 23-year-old lass breaking out of her mate-hating, too-cool boyfriend's "cage" over an elegant surge of piano/synth/strings. Timeless, innit?

2 Sissy Wish "DWTS" Norwegian one-woman band Siri Alberg has a pinched, wee voice and an infectious indie-rock throb that shifts into a punky shout and swath of swirling synths. Yeah, yeah, yeah!

3 Neil Hamburger "HOW CAN I BE PATRIOTIC (WHEN THEY'VE TAKEN AWAY MY RIGHT TO CRY)" Comedic long-sufferer Gregg Turkington takes Mr. Hamburger country and western, with devastating results.

4 Vast Aire, feat. Vordul Mega "MECCA AND THE OX" Exquisitely produced by Pete Rock with his trademark soulful pulse (plus a quirky brushstroke), the Cannibal Ox MCs ferociously reunite.

5 El Guincho "FATA MORGANA" Like M.I.A.'s hippie boyfriend, collagist du jour Pablo Diaz-Reixa airlifts you into a block-party DMZ where voices exult, steel drums ping, rhythms rumble, and synths ricochet.

6 J'Davey "SL0000W" Eccentric Los Angeles duo (and Roots affiliate) confidently slink and stroll through an irresistible mid-tempo new-wave R&B jam like Pharrell, if he weren't such a status-conscious nerd.

7 The Muslims "BRIGHT SIDE" Four non-Muslim San Diego dudes with that bighearted, can't-hardly-wait, not-hardly-trying, trash-rock savior faire that earns comparisons to the Modern Lovers and the Replacements.

8 The Mountain Goats "SIGN OF THE CROW" Couplet of the year: "Of the several things that you have to do today, you're gonna regret one / This generation asks for a sign / It isn't gonna get one."

9 Dark Meat "WELL F---K YOU THEN" Despite its Polyphonic Spree-size roster, this in-your-face, boogie-psych horn-section circus led by Athens, Georgia's Jim McHugh is a gloriously coherent force of nature.

10 Pete and the Pirates "MR. UNDERSTANDING" With dual lead vocals, head-nod guitar rah-rah, and pleasantly blunt lyrics about love down the pub, these English blokes are an unpretentious romp.

11 Wale "W.A.L.E.D.A.N.C.E." The D.C. MC with the Mark Ronson connection has been the next big whatever for the past year or so, but this free-for-all over a Justice track is his giddiest jam yet.

12 I See Hawks in L.A. "SLASH FROM GUNS N' ROSES" Their new album is a gem, but this L.A. country-rock tale of hair-metal identity theft is a cracked classic, with "Slash" as both victim/victor.

13 CoCo B's "GIVE UP THE MONEY (1982)" This crew's muscular, exhilarating indie rock is dated on Impact (early '80s and early '90s), but they testify like *The Cutting Edge* is their ticket to ride.

14 Jokers of the Scene "Y'ALL KNOW THE NAME" These two Ottawa DJ doofs take Pharoahe Monch's "Simon Says" and massage it into a siren-wailing rave blitzkrieg. Rub on your...you know.

15 Plugs "THAT NUMBER" A warbling, polyrhythmic electro shimmy that might even outdo Hot Chip. And it's a side project from one of the guys in Does It Offend You, Yeah? Huh?



Must-See Videos

Björk "Wanderlust"

The young duo Encyclopaedia Picture committed themselves to nine months of work—most of it unpaid—to create Björk's most recent video spectacle: Breathtaking landscape models and huge yak puppets frame the singer as she races down a river (only the water is CGI), wrestling with the lissome human embodiment of her worries. A marvel of (broom-assisted) creative imagination.

The Grouch "Artsy"

After falling asleep in front of the TV Living Legends member the Grouch dreams himself into an engaging mash-up of an iPod spot, HP commercial, Garth Barbery's "Crazy" video, and an Obey-themed East Bay tribute. All four become vehicles for the MC's skewering dismissal of conformist hipster dilettantes, including vegans, crate-diggers, and dreadlocked thespians.

Ssion "Ah Ma"

Ssion's disco guerrilla leader Cody Critchlow delivers a sultry individualist manifesto addressed to his mother while torturing her avatar-riding with a "punk makeover" Cody smears bleach, spits Jack Daniel's, and licks his victim's face to a kitschy synth melody (inspired by the *Super Mutchers* theme?), until a trashy guitar solo hails the sudden, colorful daybreak, and Ma's perfect new coat.



Thao With the Get Down Stay Down "Bag of Hammers"

Life can be tough when you're just trying to read the paper. Life can be especially tough when you're made of clay, live in a cardboard city where ice cream trucks serve body parts, and sell-bill musicians pick up and shake you down. One can't decide whether to feel weaned for the hounded man or the gang who cry when he finally skips town.

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GENUINE SINCE 1937



Band look on as effigy of the past decade ceremonially burns

Many Happy R.E.turns

It's great to see that R.E.M. can not only own up to a less-than-stellar album, *Around the Sun*, but also can learn and grow from it ["R.E.BORN," April]. They're back and better than ever, and hopefully a whole new generation of fans will discover how awesome they are.

STEVEN HICKS, BLDOMINGTON, INDIANA

Deer in the Spotlight

Before I read Charles Aaron's article about Bradford Cox ("Pretzel Logic," April), I had never listened to Deerhunter or Atlas Sound, yet I was immediately interested in Cox's story. The piece was enlightening and portrayed Cox for what he really is: human. I admire him for being so open about his uncertainty and self-doubt. Thanks for exposing me to yet another brilliant artist. This is why I love *Spin*.

ABBY CLINTON
JOLIET, ILLINOIS

Pussyfooting at the Disco

In the interview with Panic at the Disco guitarist Ryan Ross ("The Inquisition, April"), he was asked about Against Me!'s "Piss and Vinegar," which was written about his band. Ross' response: "I can't expect everybody to appreciate what we do. Our stage shows especially

have been kind of polarizing." In effect, he has proved Against Me!'s point. Ross sounds like a politician—instead of a true response, he has offered a middle-of-the-road opinion no one finds offensive or challenging.

PETER TREADWAY
BALTIMORE

On the Money

How convenient that salary sleuth David Browne neglected to investigate the paychecks of music journalists or editors ("Who Earns What," April). You guys got something to hide besides all those free CDs and concert tickets?

DION DIVALLI
BROOK, NEW JERSEY

You've told us how much people make in different music-industry jobs. Now tell us how to get these jobs—like musician's assistant or tour manager.

SHANA NEUSTEL
SPEARFISH, SOUTH DAKOTA

All the President's Bands

It is unfair to suggest that Vote for Change was a failure ("Power Ballads," April). Though it didn't unseat President Bush in 2004, it did have considerable impact, raising not only a sizable amount of money but also voter awareness. Moby is wrong; entertainers active in politics do make a tangible difference. It is when people get apolitical that there are problems.

KENNETH ZIMMERMAN
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA

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→ WEEZER HIT THE BEACH

Go behind the scenes of this month's cover shoot with Rivers Cuomo and the guys as they cut loose at Los Angeles' Venice Beach.

spin.com/weezer-video

→ COACHELLA MEMORIES

Hang out at our Coachella house, and watch exclusive footage of Love and Rockets, the National, Black Lips, St. Vincent, Les Savy Fav, Man Man, Metric, and many others who stopped in to chat and sometimes perform.

spin.com/coachella08

→ KUWAIT AND SEE

Watch a series of video travel blogs, plus footage documenting the onstage reunion of Filter with ex-bassist Frank Cavanaugh, a U.S. Army sergeant who was recently deployed to Iraq, at the Operation MySpace concert.

spin.com/kuwait

→ WILD IN THE STREETS

Check out YouTube clips and other Web footage that opened the world's eyes to the anti-emo riots in Mexico.

spin.com/emo-riots

The SPIN.com Poll

In this issue, we offer an oral history of the Village People's hit "YM.C.A." What other stadium anthems merit a deep investigation?

- A "Rock & Roll Part 2" by Gary Glitter
- B "Sweet Caroline" by Neil Diamond
- C "Shout" by Tears for Fears
- D "Blitzkrieg Bop" by Ramones

Cast your vote at SPIN.com!

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GONNA
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READY...

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...CAN'T
STOP...

...TOUCHING!

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MUSIC NEWS AND MORE, PLAYED AT FULL BLAST

Tours of Duty

As public support for the Iraq war wanes, rock bands fight an uphill battle to keep the troops entertained

BY PETER GASTON

Hordes of young people gather in the middle of nowhere, raising devil horns and pumping fists along to a rock-radio staple. Laser lights penetrate the deep night sky and catch dust particles launched by the stomping of boots on desert ground. But these are not Doc Martens in the Coachella mosh pit; they're the combat boots of 5,000 men and women who are mostly wrapped in the sandstone camouflage of the U.S. Army, and strapped with M16 rifles.

On this March evening, MySpace, Armed Forces Entertainment (AFE), and the Department of Defense have transformed Camp Buehring, a military base in Kuwait 15 miles south of the Iraqi border, into a giant concert venue. Featuring sets from Filter, Disturbed, the Pussycat Dolls, Jessica Simpson, and comedian Carlos Mencia, Operation MySpace is meant to offer a much-needed night of mindless diversion to the troops, the majority of whom have just arrived in the Middle East for active duty in Iraq, and is being simulcast via its namesake website to an estimated ➡



three million viewers worldwide.

"When the troops kept thanking me, I was like, 'Stop! I am here to thank you,'" says Filter frontman Richard Patrick. "I really felt like I was doing a service."

But when it comes to getting the soldiers' minds off combat for a little while, Operation MySpace is hardly the norm. Gone are the days of the star-studded USO (United Service Organizations) tours, where the likes of Bob Hope and Marilyn Monroe would perform at U.S. military bases worldwide—since Vietnam, the USO has devoted more resources to services such as mental health care for active soldiers. And booking acts is complicated by the fact that AFE and the USO are at the mercy of the Department of Defense. "DOD has to officially accept the offer, because entertainment is not the primary mission of the military," says the USO's Rachel Tischler. "We need the military to move us around and provide security and all that good stuff."

Money, of course, is just as big a factor. The backing of a major company helped Operation MySpace book big-ticket talent, but this is the exception to the rule. For its part, AFE prefers to spend its congressionally appropriated \$6.5 million annual budget—which has to cover the bands' travel (usually on commercial flights into the Middle East, then via military transport once they've arrived), rented gear, and a small per diem—on lesser-known acts, thereby increasing the frequency of shows. The USO pays only a \$50 to \$150 per diem—yes, even for Jessica Simpson—and also covers only the production costs, travel expenses, and hotel stays for its performers.

But can a band make a living from military touring? Unheralded Atlanta-based alt rockers Five Star Iris met with reps from Navy Entertainment and AFE at the RedCorilla music festival



Clockwise from left: Jessica Simpson at Operation MySpace in Kuwait this past March; ex-Filter bassist Sgt. Frank Cavanaugh jamming with Richard Patrick in Kuwait; Scarlett Johansson (shirted) blesses our boys in Kuwait in January



The military prefers to spend its budget on lesser-known acts.

In Austin, Texas, in 2007 instead of label honchos and booking agents. The resulting tour took them to bases throughout Southwest Asia on military planes and helicopters, and they now earn what they call a "nice lump sum" on this circuit. Although it does present challenges that your average van tour through college towns doesn't.

"All of a sudden, you're flying over a town and cannot help but think, 'There's got to be at least one person that would take us out if they could,'" says Five Star Iris frontman Alan Schaefer, recalling a night flight over the Iraqi desert. "Out of nowhere, two soldiers in the helicopter, at the same time, lock the weapons. And I'm thinking, 'Holy shit!'" For these guys, though, it's worth the risk. "What's

achievable is us being a sustainable business," says Schaefer, whose band is headed to Japan later this year on another military jaunt. "We've seen big spikes in our iTunes downloads, and I really think a big part of that has to do with the military. On these tours, we don't [and aren't allowed to] sell CDs, so the only way for people to get them is to buy them online."

The organizations involved would be glad to offer more recognizable talent to American troops abroad, but they have to make do with what's available. At the same time, as Navy Entertainment's Karen Fritz says, "If [the troops] don't recognize the music, they might not come see the show." For AFE and USO, word of mouth among bands can provide

a big boost. "There are groups that go out and they come back and tell their famous friends," says the USO's Tischler. "We'd love more partnering with industry, more people knowing who we are," says Col. Ed Shock of AFE.

With the war's unpopularity at home, some bands might worry about adverse reactions from their fans. For Filter, that wasn't the case. "[The reaction] was 99.9 percent positive," says Marc Pollack, the band's manager. "You have a couple of people who voice their opinion—like, 'Why would you do this for Bush?'—not understanding the real reasons why we did this."

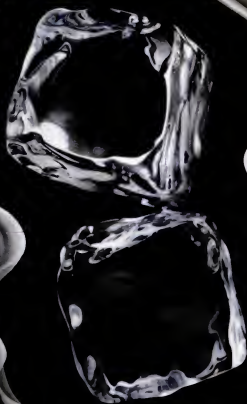
"I would absolutely recommend it to other bands," says Richard Patrick. "Someone is out there, literally doing the hard work, and it reminds you, you're American, buddy, and you get to be in a fucking rock band. How sweet is your life?"

For footage from Peter Gatzert's trip to Kuwait, go to spin.com/kuwait

Base Players

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MILITARY MORALE BOOSTING





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Brown and Hassan got down with the sickness in their dorm room; Draliman at his brother's wedding (below)

Yeshiva Destruction

Baldy metal band inspires Orthodox Jews' forbidden devotion

Critics may deride Disturbed's orthodox approach to doomy nū metal, but one segment of the band's fan base wouldn't have it any other way. A growing cult of students at yeshivas—all-male Jewish parochial schools—are risking expulsion by sneaking in copies of the band's albums and listening between Talmud classes and prayer services. Which isn't so shocking, considering that Disturbed's frontman, David Draliman, attended five of these schools (and was booted from three of them) and has since become a hero of sorts to Jewish kids bristling against religious authority.

"The rosh yeshiva [head rabbi] closed-fist socked me in the face one Purim," recalls Draliman, 35, who honed his guttural vocal chords singing cantorial hymns. In retaliation, Draliman says, he blew up the rabbi's car. "They couldn't prove it was me. So when they found a copy of *GO* under my pillow, they used it as a pretext for throwing me out."

Elie Hassan and Brian Brown, both 21, graduated from Baltimore's Ner Israel, where kids in their dorm sometimes snitched on the pair for indulging their nonkosher music habits. "I would say that 30 to 40 percent of our class knew about Draliman and had heard Disturbed," says Brown. Now college roommates at the more liberal Yeshiva University in New York, they're free to enjoy the band in relative peace.

While secular ears may dismiss Disturbed's lyrics as vague, growly outbursts, students like Hassan and Brown parse every song for references to Draliman's experiences growing up as an Orthodox Jew.

"Draliman was outside the norm and shunned by his yeshivas," says Hassan. "I can hear that in 'Conflict' [from 2000's *The Sickness*]." The songs "Prayer" and "Believe," he and Brown claim, are about Jewish spirituality; "Liberate," a denouncement of narrow-minded rabbis. "Maybe they're not there blatantly," Hassan says of the references, "but as a Jew, I can see them."

Draliman, the lone Jew in Disturbed, is up-front about the religious content of the band's songs, repeating the Hebrew word *mefachad* ("I'm afraid") in the 2000 single "Stupify" and including the line "Elokal"—Hebrew for God—"bury me tonight" in "Pain Redefined." "It's definitely something that comes out once in a while," he says. "But at this point, I'm the anti-yeshiva student, so this connection [with students] boggles my mind. All I keep [from Jewish tradition] is that I don't eat nonkosher animals and I don't have tattoos."

Since congregating with like-minded fans—online, at concerts, anywhere—isn't an option, restricted yeshiva students are forced to find more subversive ways of sharing the love of Disturbed. One current New York City-based student, who



"The head rabbi closed-fist socked me in the face one Purim."

DISTURBED'S DAVID DRAIMAN

asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals, says that kids at his school occasionally recited Sabbath lunch psalms to Disturbed melodies. "We got dirty looks from the other tables who knew it was goyish music but couldn't prove it," he says. "Sometimes it's frustrating. You just want to blast 'Stupify' down the hallways once in a while."

Hassan, who plans to buy the new Disturbed album, *Indestructible*, this month, has another theory about the band's shadowy popularity. "Everyone has a dream of becoming a wealthy rock star," he says. "As a yeshiva guy listening, you think you could make it, too." MORDECHAI SHINEFIELD



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The Appellation Trail

Name recognition goes a long way, so some acts take a shortcut by borrowing famous people's identities. But are they any good? We ask three celebs to weigh in on their **namesake bands**.



Kane Hodder

WHO ARE THEY?

A hyperactive screamo quintet with a yen for slapstick and satirical song titles

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"I was always obsessed with horror films. I loved the *Friday the 13th* movies," says singer Andrew Moore. "When I found out that this guy Kane Hodder had played Jason more than once, I thought that was cool. So I threw the name out there—kind of as a joke—and it stuck."

THE REAL KANE HODDER SAYS:

"I'm a headbanger from way back, so I like it. I've heard most of the band's music, and they're definitely improving. It'd be nice if the singer wasn't growling all the time, though."



Lee Majahs?

WHO IS HEY?

This veteran Philly-based DJ concocts lush, simmering lava-lamp electronica.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"I was a fan of *The Six Million Dollar Man* from way back," Majahs? explains. "[Majors] character Steve Austin crashed his plane in the Nevada Salt Flats, which is near the Burning Man festival. That's where I made my name as a DJ. It's all connected."

THE REAL LEE MAJAHS SAYS:

"I like how the music keeps changing. Sometimes it's jazzy; sometimes it's jungle-y. I walk to the post office every morning to get my mail and pick up the papers—this would be perfect to listen to when I do that."



The Tony Danza Tapdance Extravaganza

WHO ARE THEY?

These math-metal Southerners make music only well-coordinated octopi could dance to.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

"Our guitar player was having a wet dream and thought of the name," jokes singer Jessie Frelend. Seriously, though: "Too many metal bands out there have such heavy names. We went with the stupidest one we could think of."

THE REAL TONY DANZA SAYS:

"I have a feeling these guys are good at what they do, but I don't know what they're doing. I'm more of a rap fan. You've heard of Vanilla Ice? Call me Italian Ice!" DAVID MARCHESE



Buzzcatcher

UNDER THE RADAR AND BLASTING FROM OUR OFFICES

Apes & Androids

WHO: Capes & Androids is more like it. By giving their gleaming '80s-infused robo-dance tracks an irresistibly glamorous strut, A&A have built the perfect bridge between two deliriously decadent fantasies. **LATEST:** *Blood Moon* (self-released) **FOR FANS OF:** LCD Soundsystem, David Bowie

The Acorn

WHO: Adding South American simmer to indie's third-world fascination, this Canadian collective crams more percussion than you can shake a drumstick at into songs brimming with celebratory group vocals, burbling bass lines, and serpentine guitar. **LATEST:** *Glory Hap Mountain* (Paper Bag) **FOR FANS OF:** Yeasayer, Talking Heads

The Pinker Tones

WHO: This Barcelona duo hit like a spicier Daft Punk, keeping the retro electronica but trading the po-mo mind games for hip-twisting grooves. Bring oil if you catch them on Warped Tour this summer—you will be doing the electric slide. **LATEST:** *Wild Animals* (National) **FOR FANS OF:** Kraftwerk, Chromeo



← Cloud Cult

WHO: Without ever neglecting main man Craig Minowa's melodic gifts, these Minnesotans career from sawing string ballads to jerky funk. The album's parenthetical is as apt a description of their sound as you're going to find. **LATEST:** *Feel Good Ghosts (Tea-Partying Through Tornadoes)* (Earlology) **FOR FANS OF:** Arcade Fire, Okkervil River



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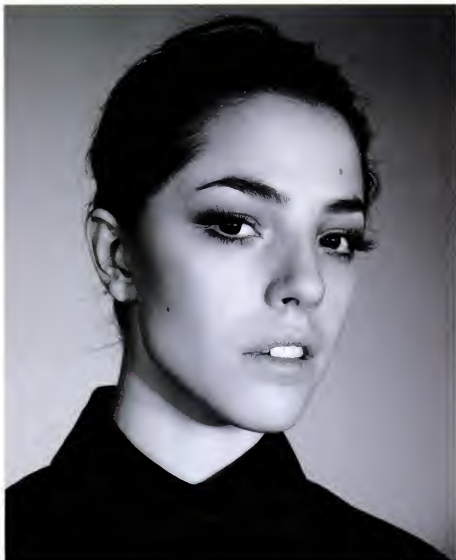
"I've watched *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* more times than I can count. Every teen movie to this day is still trying to be *Ferris Bueller*. I love the part where Matthew Broderick is in the shower talking to the camera. I totally had a crush on him."



"*Oliver Sacks* writes about crazy neurological disorders, but he writes about it in such a compelling way it's almost like fiction. *An Anthropologist on Mars* is a great book. I'm not exactly a science person, but I do read things other than *Us Weekly*. I loved these stories of people and the extraordinary ways their brains work."



"When I was in middle school, it was cool to like *Alanis Morissette*. A bunch of my girlfriends and I would sit around and sing songs from *Jagged Little Pill*. I still know all the lyrics to 'Ironie' even though I didn't truly grasp the meaning of the word until three or four years ago."



Olivia Thirlby

The guide to how entertainers entertain themselves. This month: The costar of the '90s nostalgia comedy *The Wackness*.



"*A Tribe Called Quest*'s 'Can I Kick It?' is my all-time favorite song, and it's very exciting to be in a film that features it on the soundtrack. I think '90s-era hip-hop is good to listen to anytime: when you're in the shower or driving or cleaning the house. Rap music is so serious now. It's all about being hard. Tribe had a real sense of humor."



"I appreciate *Adam Sandler*'s brand of comedy. *Happy Gilmore* and *Billy Madison* were the funniest movies I'd ever seen [when I was a kid]. He's got his own thing going on with the funny voices. That scene in *Billy Madison* where he goes, 'What are you looking at, penguin?' still makes me laugh."



"I'm a Shakespeare nut. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was the first of his plays that I read and performed, so I have a real affection for it. He was pretty handy. One of the most blatant scenes is when Helena says, 'I am your spaniel.' I'm not going to get into it, but it's dirty."



"I'm starting to get into more indie rock now, and *Joanna Newsom* is the shit. *Ys* is exquisite. I mean, her voice can be a bit much, and her first album is a little abrasive, but there's a stark originality to her singing. And the way she sets her lyrics to these complex melodies—you so rarely find repetition in her songs."



"I love cooking shows, like *Iron Chef*. It's inspiring to see people work on the composition of a dish. After I watch it, I go to the supermarket and try to find something really extravagant to make. I just figured out a cool way to fry an egg on top of a stack of onions with some Worcestershire sauce and capers."



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Members of Times
New Viking, Psychotic
Horseshit, and Pink
Reason

[ANATOMY OF A SCENE]

Sh*tgaze

Columbus, Ohio, gives lo-fi a new, sorta gross name

→ **THE GENESIS**

Though Columbus is probably best known as a way station between Cleveland and Cincinnati, Times New Viking's signing to grown-up label Matador Records has made the city the center of a burgeoning lo-fi scene. Art-school kids TNV befriended Psychotic Horseshit singer Matt Whitehurst in 2005, who in turn befriended Green Bay, Wisconsin native Kevin DeBroux, the only constant member of Pink Reason. DeBroux enjoyed his trips to Columbus so much that after dropping acid at a party one night, he decided to stay. (He is now also Horseshit's bassist.)

The term *shitgaze* originated, as all good rock nomenclature must, from a drug-induced inside joke. "We were sitting around stoned listening to the Psychotic Horseshit album, and I knew Matt was into '90s U.K.] shoegaze stuff," DeBroux says. "I'm like, 'Man, this isn't shoegaze; this is shitgaze.'" Whitehurst stuck the word up on Horseshit's MySpace

page, and it became the tag for a Columbus-centric genre, though it's also becoming an umbrella term for other lo-fi Midwesterners such as Tyvek and TV Ghost.

→ **THE SOUND**

Everything these bands record is spiked in the red and cloaked in caustic fuzz. Vocals are intelligible every so often, and snare hits resemble chopsticks on tin foil. You could say Psychotic Horseshit's bass drum sounds like a cardboard box...cause it is.

"I'd rather be called shitpop or tweecore," says Times New Viking singer/keyboardsist Beth Murphy, and she's right to want the pop aspect accentuated: Underneath all that hissy static and garbled vocals are well-crafted albeit primitive songs. "Devo & Wine," and "My Head" are not too far removed from the output of fellow Ohioans Guided by Voices.

→ **THE HUB**

The locus of the scene is Cafe Bourbon Street, neither a café,

nor on Bourbon Street. The appropriately grimy dive is nestled in an area christened Washington Beach (after a neighborhood in *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*), north of Ohio State University. TNV's singer/drummer Adam Elliott and guitarist Jared Phillips work there, and Whitehurst used to. At Cafe Bobo (as the locals call it), ceiling tiles are shredded and big beams obscure patrons' view of the stage. Be it ever so humble...

→ **ESSENTIAL MUSIC**

Vinyl is the medium of choice for shitgazers, and Philadelphia indie label Siltbreeze is the best place to begin. Times New Viking's *Dig Yourself* started it all, followed by last year's *Present the Paisley Reich* and this year's Matador release, *Rip It Off*, which keeps the noisy hiss but adds stronger songwriting. Psychotic Horseshit's ramshackle debut, *Magic Flowers Drowned*, is required listening, while Pink Reason's *Cleaning the Mirror* is a more intimate and personal DIY gem. **JOEL OUPHINT**

The Spin 20 Ranking on Pop Culture Since 1998

- 1** SCHOOL'S OUT! No-good kids now free to text each other, ignore grown-ups in privacy of own homes
- 2** IT'S NOT THE HEAT, IT'S THE HUMIDITY Also, though, it's the heat
- 3** SUMMER TV DOLDRUMS Remind us a lot of the winter TV doldrums
- 4** VELVET REVOLVER SEARCH FOR NEW SINGER ONLINE It's currently a toss-up between Tay Zonday and the talking cat
- 5** L.A. GALLERY SELLS \$5,000 BONGS We're so high we thought that said "\$5,000 bong"
- 6** NEW COLDPLAY ALBUM INFLUENCED BY FRIDA KAHLO Snow Patrol take note, hire Salma Hayek to design their new cover
- 7** WEARING FLIP-FLOPS TO WORK Comfortable, but sanitary?
- 8** RADIOHEAD DECREASE CARBON FOOTPRINT And you know what they say about smaller carbon footprints...



- 9** NATALIE LOVES DEVENDRA That's it. We're done with this whole showering thing.
- 10** HVES SONG HELPS SELL SEARS WASHING MACHINES Too bad it only cleans black and white clothes
- 11** MIKE MYERS' THE LOVE GURU His casting even offended C. Thomas Howell
- 12** CONTEMPLATING THE DEATH OF PRIND Did we mention every issue of Spin comes with a free back rub? C'mere, you!
- 13** AKON'S THREE-YEAR PRISON STINT EXAGGERATED... BY ABOUT THREE YEARS Also revealed: He's a white 53-year-old mother of three from Shreveport
- 14** 58 PERCENT OF MUSIC IN U.S. DOWNLOADED FOR FREE What happens when you can no longer buy 20 albums for a penny
- 15** MILEY CYRUS PENS AUTOBIOGRAPHY Publishers are delaying release until her fans learn how to read
- 16** CONOR OBERT RELEASES SOLO ALBUM Ohan Marshall leaves Cat Power over creative differences
- 17** NBA PLAYOFFS HENRY Watched since they stopped using John Tesh theme song
- 18** JUNE IS NATIONAL PEST-CONTROL MONTH We're looking at you, Mom
- 19** THE GAME'S LOS ANGELES TIMES An insightful song cycle about the decline of print media
- 20** CASTING SKINNY ACTORS AS SUPERHEROES A byproduct of hiring pro wrestlers to play babysitters

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MORE ABOUT LIL MAMA

While the video for "Shawty Get Loose," off her debut album, *Voice of the Young People*, is in heavy rotation on MTV, it's her Judging on the channel's *America's Best Dance Crew* that lights up the pop-size "Lip Gloss" rapper (born Niatla Kirkland). "IbbieWoddee2 and Status Quo always brought something new to the table," she says of season one's winner and runner-up. "I go backstage and talk to them, but you can't really get personal, because you're a judge."

MANDATE OF HEAVEN: JUMPER, AT PATRICIA FIELD; MANDATED: HEAVENCLOTHING.COM; DKNY JEANS T-SHIRT, DKNYJEANS.COM; AMERICAN APPAREL TIGHTS, AMERICANAPPAREL.NY; DR. MARTENS BOOTS, DR.MARTENS.COM; NIKON WATCH, NIKONNOW.COM; TRIPP NYC GLOVES, AT TRASH AND VAUDEVILLE, TRIPPNYC.COM; STYLING BY ERIC S. BULLENHILL; HAIR BY GEORGIA HUGES; MAKEUP BY SHALEA WALKER.

Lil Mama

The 18-year-old rap diva allows us into her Brooklyn bedroom

1 **HOMEMADE POSTER** "I was on tour with Chris Brown, and one of my fans gave me this poster with my pictures. To have a grown male fan, it really shocked me, but I was happy to know that someone really cared and knew my background, like where I'm from. I think that's pretty special."

2 **SKI GOGGLES** "I wore them in my video for 'Shawty Get Loose,' in the scene where I had the purple wig on and am wearing all white. It was really spacy."

3 **TELETUBBY ANTENNA** "The Teletubbies' company sent me a whole package with different little headpieces. And this one is Po's headband. Po is my favorite."

4 **COOKIE MONSTER TOY** "This is my sister's Cookie Monster. She's five, and she's all over him. Toys like this always end up in my room or in my hair. You never know what you're going to get in this house."

5 **BALL CAP** "I love hats, period. And I always leave my ponytail out at the top. I'm going to have some custom-made really soon."

6 **SNEAKERS** "That's the first glittery custom pair of kicks I ever got. I wore them in an episode of [BET's live video countdown show] *106 & Park*."

7 **SCARF** "It smells like somebody else's hair. [Yells] *Who's been in my room?* Ed Hardy gave me this. I said I needed a scarf to tie my hair up, and they sent me about 15. This one's my favorite; the rest I gave away to the community—cousins, friends. I'm always giving something away."

8 **BOARD GAME** "There was a program called 'Playschool' at my elementary school—class of '97—and we used to play Candy Land all the time. This version has Mickey Mouse, but I had the original Candy Land."

9 **CEREAL** "Fruity Pebbles is my favorite. I eat it every morning, no matter where I am. If I'm on the road, I keep Fruity Pebbles packed in a suitcase."

10 **HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE** "The movie and book are sick, for sure. I've read the popular ones. My brother reads them all, but I don't really have the time. I need to find the time—you know, on a flight instead of sleeping."

BY WILLIAM GOODMAN
PHOTOGRAPH BY TINA TYRELL



MORE AT SPIN.COM For a video tour of Lil Mama's apartment, log on to spin.com/lilmama



Neil Diamond

When you regularly perform in spangly shirts, it can be hard to get taken seriously. So with the release of 2005's spare, elegiac *12 Songs* (produced by Rick Rubin), Neil Diamond sought to remind skeptics that he wasn't just the guy to blame for those annoying "Sweet Caroline" Red Sox sing-alongs. The album's solemn storytelling and acoustic settings reopened doors for the 67-year-old Diamond that stayed open for the stately new *Home Before Dark* (Columbia), also produced by Rubin. "I'm writing how I did when I started," says Diamond. "In my heart of hearts, I'm not only 'Forever in Blue Jeans.'"

Is it a backhanded compliment when people talk about your recent music as a return to form?
I take that at face value. People can like the album for whatever reasons they want. I've always written darker and more introspective songs, but they have been sublimated by my more commercial tunes. I secretly hope someday people will sit down and examine my work and come to their own conclusions about it. I don't think my place in the music world will be understood until I'm gone.

You once said you dreamt of doing as much musically as "Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and Robert Frost."
I must've been smoking something when I said that.

But it does seem like there's been a gradual shift in the way people see your work.
It started with *Pulp Fiction*. Interestingly enough, when Quentin Tarantino first sent me his script, I'd

turned down the use of that song [Urge Overkill's cover of "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon"]. I thought the scene it was used in was heavily into the drug ambience, and I'd promised myself that I wouldn't allow my music to sensationalize drug use. But my publisher argued on Quentin's behalf, and I reconsidered, even though I was very, very wary about it. That was really the beginning of the turnaround for me.

Where had you gone wrong before that?
The '80s were a sleepy decade for me. I didn't fit in. I felt videos had no place in music and refused to do them, so I concentrated on touring. But when *Pulp Fiction* brought me back to the forefront, I realized that if I had been wrong about that, then how many other situations could I also have been wrong about? Maybe I could have done some interesting videos. After reexamining what I was doing, I reached the conclusion that I wasn't satisfied with my work. I had been avoiding the process of going inside myself and writing songs; everything was collaboration. I had to get back to the solitary style of writing.

Do you feel like you're following in Johnny Cash's footsteps by working once again with Rick Rubin?
I had that conversation early on in my relationship with Rick—I told him I did not want to be Johnny Cash. I wanted to be Neil Diamond. If he saw me as Neil Diamond, we would be able to work together, but if he saw me as Johnny Cash, we were done talking. We never had to talk about that again.

The Dixie Chicks' Natalie Maines sings on the album's "Another Day [That Time Forgot]." Did the two of you talk politics?
I've only just begun to ponder the election. I've been cloistered for the last 14 or 15 months writing the music for *Home Before Dark*. In that time, I have not read a newspaper, I have not seen a television show, I have not gone to the movies. I'm a baseball addict, and I have not seen a single baseball game. When I'm making an album, I turn everything else off.

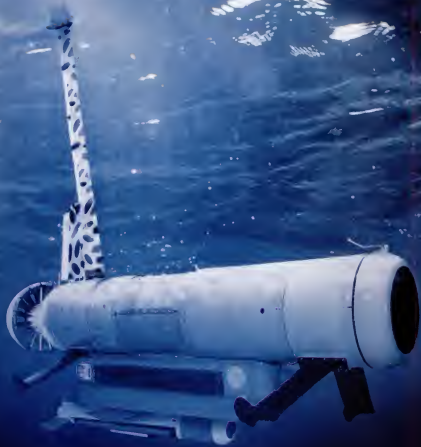
Barry Bonds broke the home-run record. I knew that.

In the movie *What About Bob?* Bill Murray's character says there are two kinds of people in the world: those who like Neil Diamond and those who don't. Is that true?
I don't know if that's true. When my new album was played in Europe by my management team, there were people from certain countries at the listening session who cried. Then there were people...the French representatives gave it the cold shoulder. They didn't get it. This is life. What can I possibly do?

You've sold 120 million albums, and your divorce settlement cost you \$150 million dollars. Which number means more?

The settlement number is totally untrue. A newspaper person made that number up out of thin air, and I've not been able to live it down. Early on, I decided not to even try—I thought I'd get on with my life. But I'll go on record now for the first time and say that it's ridiculous. I wish it were true. She was a great woman.

BY DAVID MARCHESE



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The Honor Roll

THESE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS

ZEN LISTENING

Made from wood by Indonesian craftspeople in areas of high unemployment, Singgih Kartono's **Magno Radio** (designpublic.com) is as easy on the conscience as it is on the ears and eyes. It even doubles as a computer speaker.

FULL METAL JACKET

Following Accrassauda's struggle just to exist in postliberation Iraq, **Heavy Metal in Baghdad** (Vice Films) tells an affecting story of frustration, displacement, and the power of rock. Western metal bands don't know from hardcore.



BK IN THE DAY

The alternative street sneaker of the late '80s and '90s, **British Knights** (britishknights.com) are back in all their heavy-soled, fat-tongued glory. Here's hoping former spokesman MC Hammer doesn't follow suit.



CHUCK D HAS A POSSE

Shepard Fairey (the man who turned Andre the Giant into Big Brother) redesigns PE's trademark crosshairs in his new **Obey/Public Enemy** collaboration (obeyclothing.com). Wear it to remember a time before VH1 found Flavor Flav.



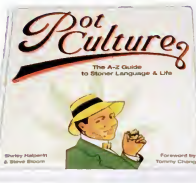
TIN EARED

Kollective.de's **Tin Bots** (therobot.com) take iPod protection up a notch with colorful urban designs rendered in durable tin. And with easy-access slots, you'll never have to look at that eternally smudged silver backing again.



SMOKE SIGNALS

From the art of copping (by Rob Thomas) to strategies for smell-hiding (courtesy of Brady bride Adrienne Curry), the comprehensive info in **Pot Culture: The A-Z Guide** (Abrams Image) will have (some of) you taking notes between bong hits.





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ENJOY IN MODERATION

The Chapin Sisters

Showbiz folk family ditch Olsens, find their true voices

The Chapin Sisters recently released their debut album, but the three siblings—all nieces of late singer/songwriter Harry Chapin (of "Cat's in the Hat" fame)—have been singing separately and together since they were kids: Jessica, 40, cut class to record commercial jingles, while Abigail, 28, and Lily, 26, pulled children's choir duty on records by the Olsen twins, among others. "I ran into Mary-Kate and a New Year's Eve party a few years ago," Abigail says, grabbing a bite with her sisters before a show at the Echo in Los Angeles. "I told her I sang on *Brother for Sale*, 50¢, and she was like, 'Uh...cool...thanks.'"

Others in Los Angeles (where the trio

moved from New York—Jessica in 2001, Abigail and Lily in 2004) have received them more warmly: During the Chapins' first year in town, their sparse acoustic cover of Britney Spears' "Toxic" became a surprise hit at influential Santa Monica radio station KCRW. "It's unique," says Nic Harcourt, host of the station's *Morning Becomes Eclectic*, "and whenever you put something unique on the radio, people respond."

The sisters also perform gorgeous close-harmony renditions of Madonna's "Borderline" and Culture Club's "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me." But for *Lake Bottom LP* (Plain Recordings)—the title refers to a family farm in New Jersey—the Chapins wanted to showcase original material, which they started writing when they realized that

FAST FACTS

→ The Chaplins have the same mom, Bonnie, but have different dads; Abigail and Lily's is Grammy-winning singer/songwriter Tom Chapin; Jessica's is horror director Wes Craven.

→ Jessica once sang the "Uh-oh, Spaghettios!" jingle.

"doing a show with five covers would pretty much get us nowhere," admits Jessica.

Adds Lily, "We didn't wanna be stuck singing those songs forever."

On "Let Me Go" and "Wash Away," the sisters bring spooky freak-folk atmospheres to old-timey string-band arrangements—think *The Virgin Suicides* set in rural Appalachia. And though the ladies enjoy performing in flowing vintage gowns and playing up the music's dramatic qualities, they also say the songs act as an affordable form of therapy. Jessica, for one, wrote the lyrics to "Kill Me Now" about her recent divorce.

"There's something paradoxically healing about taking the darkest shit inside of you," she says, "and putting it into this really pretty package."

BY MIKAEL WOOD

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRIGITTE SIRE

Clockwise from top left: Jessica Craven, Abigail Chapin, and Lily Chapin, photographed for *Spin* in Griffith Park, Los Angeles, March 27, 2008



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NOISE

The Ting Tings

Brash British duo can dish it out and take it

Breaking Out

In Katie White's native Manchester, they call it "footballer's injury." Or, in her case, "spazzing out."

"I got groin strain awhile back 'cause I was carrying gear that was much too heavy," the Ting Tings singer/guitarist breezily recalls, as drummer Jules De Martino winces. "We didn't have a roadie, and we were touring the U.K. and carting equipment ourselves—us against the world."

Burlier folk now do the band's heavy lifting, but a few traits remain from that period: The twosome are still tenaciously self-sufficient, and White continues to hurt herself. (Today, over flutes of champagne at New York's Tribeca Grand Hotel, she sports a luridly bruised pinkie, the result of overzealous banging on a bass drum.) They speak with reservation about their rising U.K. media profile, and quickly mention that their first band together, the ambient-rock Dear Eskimo, flamed out at this same point in the hype cycle. That anxiety is reflected on the Ting Tings' debut album, *We Started Nothing* (Red/Columbia), a club-ready jolt flecked with astringent guitar, strangled yelps, and De Martino's electronic loops.

"Dear Eskimo got signed [in 2005, to Mercury], and it became a nightmare," laments De Martino, 33. "All the guys who worked with us [at the label] got sacked, and we sat there without a release date. Then we got dropped and got bitter. A lot of our songs now are about the downside then, expressing what we wanted."

Amid the wiry pop of *We Started Nothing*'s "Shut Up and Let Me Go," White, 23, struts into the sunset, then gives a Kate Pierson backhand to overbearing blokes on the fetching single "That's Not My Name," snapping, "Are you calling me darling? / Are you calling me bird?" Her overt defiance just masks a buried romanticism, though, which is coded in the band's name.

"Ting Ting means 'an old bandstand' in Mandarin, which I thought was very visual," explains White. "Then we found it also meant 'the sound of innovation on an open mind.' Like 'Ting!' when you get an idea—it's that little impact." It's an impact that will hopefully be less painful from now on.

BY STACEY ANDERSON
PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL CLEMENT

FAST FACTS

→ Both Ting Tings were teen poppers earlier in their careers—De Martino in the late-'90s flop Babakato and White in the late-'90s Spice Girls knockoff TKO.

→ White, an amateur clothing designer, stitches most of her stage ensembles.

A flare for the dramatic: Jules De Martino and Katie White

—GARY WOLSTENHOLME

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Here are a few killer ways to fulfill your rock-and-roll fantasies.



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Few things come close to the rush of a rock concert. Few things come close to the rush of a rollercoaster. Put them together and you have Hard Rock Park—the world's first and only rock-and-roll theme park. Located in Myrtle Beach, SC, the park has rides themed to rock icons like Led Zeppelin and The Moody Blues, with many more on the way.



HARD ROCK CAFE

The one that started it all actually started by accident. In 1971, two shaggy-haired Americans opened up a diner in London. It had nothing to do with memorabilia. Or rock and roll. But Eric Clapton was a regular. And to mark his favorite table, they hung his Fender Lead II on the wall. After that, a few more items were added. And then more. And more. Now, 37 years later, Hard Rock International has the world's largest collection of rock-and-roll memorabilia.



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The Little Ones

L.A. optimists create insanely catchy, mood-altering pop

FAST FACTS

→ Before the Little Ones, Ed Reyes and Ian Moreno played together in Sunday's Best, a mid-level emo band featuring future members of the Jealous Sound and the Bronx.

→ LaDouceur met Moreno as a result of dating the guitarist's younger sister. "Everyone says exactly the same thing when they hear that," discloses Moreno. "They're like, 'Niiice!'"

Ian Moreno, Ed Reyes, Lee LaDouceur, and Brian Reyes

The Little Ones play a perky brand of blue-skies indie pop that sounds like a retrofitted blast from California's endless-summer past. Behind frontman Ed Reyes' friendly-dude demeanor, however, lurk the beginnings of a cranky old man.

"I was totally anti-MySpace until the beginning of 2006," Reyes says, downing beers with his bassist brother Brian and guitarist Ian Moreno at a grungy dive down the street from his house in Los Angeles' musician-besotted Silver Lake neighborhood. Reyes blames the Luddite attitude on his former day job in a major-label A&R department, which entailed scanning countless "terrible-looking" MySpace profiles for acts to bring to his boss' attention. But a year into the Little Ones' existence, he caved and put up a bare-bones page. "No pictures, no music, nothing," he says. "I woke up the next morning, and there were ten or 12 kids wanting to be our friends. I was like, 'Okay, I give in!'"

The band went on to sell all 2,800 copies of a self-released EP—including 100 that Reyes shipped to London's venerable Rough Trade shop—and signed to Astralwerks, recording *Morning Tide*, a bright-and-shiny charmer that might be the

giddiest thing you'll hear all year. If you get to hear it this year: In February, Astralwerks dropped the Little Ones as a result of corporate restructuring at parent company EMI. "It's disappointing," Reyes admits, before adding that his experience in the major-label machine prepared him for such a turn of events. "Smaller bands are usually the first ones to go."

While they weigh their options, the Little Ones—who also include keyboardist Lee LaDouceur and drummer David Esau—have just issued a new EP on their own. Several labels have expressed interest in signing the group, but Reyes says he'd be just as happy resuming his self-employed ways.

That's not surprising, given Reyes and his bandmates' "positive outlook on life." Earnest and unironic to the core, the Little Ones stand out in Silver Lake's sulky indie scene; for Reyes, cheering up fans is more important than impressing peers: "I just like the idea that you can get into somebody's head and sway their mood."

BY MIKAEL WOOD
PHOTOGRAPH BY AUTUMN DE WILDE



SPINFLASH



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[1] Rose Harting

Let Me Breathe 2008

Detroit, MI

March 15, 2008

In order to raise funds and spread awareness of cystic fibrosis, Letsrockcf.org hosted their 5th annual benefit at the Royal Oak Music Theater.

WHO

Local bands Bull Halsey, Whitley Morgan & the 78's, South Normal, Sponge, and Letsrockcf.org founder Emily Schaller's band HELLN entertained the crowd.



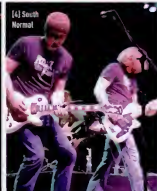
[2] Emily Schaller



[3] Whitley Morgan
& the 78's



[5] South Normal



[4] South Normal



[6]



[7]



[8]

Around the Block

New York, NY

March 31, 2008

Oakley invited friends and family to the Nicholas Robinson Gallery to showcase the artwork and artist collaboration sunglasses of Frank Kozik, Todd Francis, the London Police, Will Barras, Art Chantry, C100, and Andrew Petterson.

WHO

Artists, friends, and fans came by to check out the custom frames and flaunt their artistic sides by designing and screen printing their own t-shirts.



[9] Artist Andrew Petterson



[10]

Vestal

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TIME IS WHAT YOU MAKE OF

VESTAL

Brian Bell, Rivers
Cuomo, Scott
Shriner, and
Patrick Wilson,
photographed
for *Spin* in Venice
Beach, California,
April 8, 2008



Photographs by
Sasha Eisenman

Styling by Houston Sama, Grooming
by Raina Antle for Exclusive Artists
Management. Set design by Kadu
Lennox for Frank Reys.



KICK ON WHEELS

By Steve Kandell

THANKS TO A RENEWED SENSE OF FUN AND A CLUTCH OF GREAT ROCK SONGS ABOUT, UM, ROCK—NOT TO MENTION SOME GOOD OL' MARITAL RELATIONS—**WEEZER** ARE RIDING HIGH. NOT LITERALLY, OF COURSE.

HE GATE TO BOB DYLAN'S COMPOUND

is wide open. Peering in, we can see an RV and a rusted '70s-vintage Volvo or maybe a Volkswagen. There's no telling how far back this dirt road goes or how much of this hilly Malibu coastline the hallowed property inhabits. We contemplate parlaying our leisurely scooter ride on this clear, mild April afternoon into a little leisurely trespassing. Or one of us does, anyway.

"There's security cameras everywhere," Rivers Cuomo cautions warily. The 38-year-old Weezer frontman is wearing a blue zip-up hoodie, plaid

shorts, and white tube socks pulled up to his knees. And, naturally, a helmet.

"What's the worst that can happen?" I ask.

"Your career would be over," he replies, grinning, then revs up his Vespa and veers around the block, deciding—wisely, I now realize—that this intrusion would be no way to treat a neighbor. I crane my neck for a last prying look and follow him back to his house.

Much attention has been paid to Cuomo's peculiarly minimalist domestic needs—after ditching his material possessions in the summer of 2003, he lived in a converted garage in Hollywood with the windows blackened out, and at the peak of his stardom, he took up residence in a Harvard dorm to finish his bachelor's degree in English lit. When I last talked to him in late 2005, he was two and a half years into a two-year vow of celibacy, wondering aloud whether being in a rock band was conducive to achieving his real dream of having a family. Now he owns sweet scooters and a house in a tony Point Dume enclave somewhere between Dylan's and Mel Gibson's, while the surest proof that his celibacy has ended, 11-month-old daughter Mia, is off visiting Grandma with Kyoko, Cuomo's wife of two years. And, although it was in doubt for a while there, Cuomo is still very much in a rock band.

In fact, Weezer's eponymous sixth full-length—helpfully dubbed the "Red Album" to distinguish it from 1994's beloved debut "Blue Album" and 2001's belated "Green Album," but consciously suggesting those records' breeziness—is virtually a concept album about how fuckin' rad it is to be in a rock band. Weezer formed at the height of grunge, appropriating its woe-is-me lyrics and big guitars and indie's understated geek-chic, adding a winkless sense of humor too often lacking in both genres. A generation later, a lot has changed. A lot has not.

With two modest bedrooms and a pool surrounded by childproof fencing, Cuomo's ranch house, enviable as it is, does not necessarily look like it belongs to a man who's sold more than ten million albums. Which is to say, it does look like it belongs to Rivers Cuomo. That's his Subaru Legacy in the driveway. Even at his most indulgent, he will not allow himself any more than he needs.

"This neighborhood feels like magic to me. We saw something like 30 houses; this was our favorite," he says. As much as people have tried to fit Cuomo into the eccentric pop genius/Brian Wilson role—and certainly his disposition toward oversharing details about his sex life (or lack thereof) has fed into that—he's merely a proud suburban dad showing off his backyard. "It's not too big; modern houses are really big. We don't want to clean that much."

The first thought is that Cuomo must be joking—surely it occurred to him that he has the means to get a little help with the dusting and mopping. But, colossal ham that he may be, Cuomo is never exactly joking. His recent YouTube clips inviting fans to help him write a song aren't a goof, but rather evidence of the former autocrat's newfound openness to collaboration. Atop his lip rests a bushy mustache that men under 40 generally cultivate either to win a bet or after losing one. But he grew it when Mia was born as a tribute to his own father, who sports one in all of Cuomo's old baby photos.

Malibu was not the Cuomos' only option; they were also checking out homes in Connecticut, just down the street from where his parents lived. In the wake of



the bad vibes surrounding the last Weezer effort, 2005's *Make Believe*, Cuomo's ambivalence about continuing the band nearly drove him back East for good. But he downplays that ambivalence now, shrugging it off as if the fate of one of the most enduring and commercially steady acts in rock wasn't hanging in the balance.

"I don't remember what I was thinking," he says. "Maybe I didn't know if I was going to get back into music and just wanted to settle down." He nods his head and squints a bit, as if trying to conjure a hazy memory from decades ago. "That must have been what I was thinking."

To a man, the members of Weezer acknowledged that the period surrounding the relatively maudlin, navel-gazing *Make Believe* was a tough one and that the album suffered as a result, albeit not commercially—it still sold 1.2 million copies in the U.S. and spawned their most successful single, "Beverly Hills." Cuomo was back at Harvard, while the other three were left to interpret his demos on their own, and beyond that, his recent immersion in stringent vipassana meditation didn't necessarily lend itself to the rigors of recording and promoting a rock album. But each is quick to dismiss the idea that the band, which earlier had



Weezer reenact the storming of Normandy. *Body.*

endured a tenuous hiatus between 1996's *Pinkerton* and the *Green Album*, was truly in danger of breaking up. On this point they are insistent and vigorously on-message, if perhaps selectively amnesiac.

"The biggest misconception is that we don't get along," says bassist Scott Shriner, a tea-scented toothpick nestled next to a gold-capped front tooth. "Horrible misconception."

Strolling through the Autry Museum of the American West in Griffith Park, Shriner stops at a glass case displaying guns from the 19th century and recalls that when he moved to Los Angeles from Toledo in 1990 not long after a two-year stint in the Marines, he packed his bass amp, his coffee maker, and a shotgun. ("I was from Ohio; I thought L.A. was gonna be dangerous.") Although he's still technically the new guy, Shriner has been in Weezer for three of their six albums and seven of their 14 years. He is just over the hump now, a unique vantage point from which to observe the band's dynamic, even as his role within it solidifies and grows. At 42, he's the oldest member, and given that the closest Shriner had come to success previously was playing bass for Vanilla Ice during the erstwhile

ON BELL: THOM BROWNE JACKET; BAND OF OUTSIDERS SHIRT AND TIE; JUICY COUTURE FOR MEN SHORTS AND SUNGLASSES, JUICYCOUTURE.COM; PUMA BELT, PUMA.COM; CONVERSE SHOES, CONVERSE.COM. ON WILSON: JUICY COUTURE FOR MEN JACKET AND SHORTS, WHITEHORSE COUTURE T-SHIRT, CONVERSE SHOES, ON CUOMO: THOM BROWNE JACKET; BAND OF OUTSIDERS SHIRT AND BOW TIE; STEVEN ALAN SHORTS; ANITA HOPKINS HAT; RAY-BAN WAYFARERS, RAYBAN.COM; ORIGINAL PENGUIN BELT; NIXON WATCH, NIXONNOW.COM; CONVERSE SHOES, ON SHRINER: BAND OF OUTSIDERS SUIT; CONVERSE BY JOHN VARVATOS SHIRT, CONVERSE SHOES, ROCK & REPUBLIC SUNGLASSES, MARIA HARRIS KEY NECKLACE, HAN CHOLO NECKLACE AND SKULL RING, ROSEARK RING.

rapper's nü-metal phase, he may have the most at stake in the group's well-being. Which is why he greets you with a wince the mere mention of a magazine article from three years ago that spelled out in no uncertain terms (and in his own words) how the band did not, in fact, get along.

"Yeah, I was having a bad day," he says, smiling, eager to change the subject. "I feel like saying anything about all that is just giving it power, you know? It just seems so irrelevant now, like a different lifetime."

Instead, Shriner accentuates the positive, recounting the feel-good listening parties—with cupcakes!—in late 2006 where Cuomo first presented his new demos to the band and explaining how their four wildly disparate personalities and musical tastes actually serve to improve the group's chemistry. And how

"I bet we could do it all over again—start a new band, hide our identities, figure out the right moves. Sounds like a dare."

—Rivers Cuomo

that tension is what makes Weezer "the greatest band that ever lived."

"It's a four-way yin and yang," he says. "If you take away the guy who listens to Gary Numan or the guy who listens to Dylan all day or the guy who listens to Japanese pop or the guy who listens to Mastodon, then it won't sound the same."

For all the platitudes about how bands are like families and even families go through rough patches, etc., even at the outset, Weezer were never about four pals piling into the van for kicks; they were careerist and commercially ambitious even in 1993, when careerism and commercial ambition were not in vogue.

"It's the 'music business,' not the 'music fun,'" says guitarist Brian Bell, 39, who joined Weezer midway through the recording of the first album and who doesn't appear to have aged a day since. Perched in the sunroom of his Encino ranch house wearing a charcoal pinstripe blazer with a tear in the right armpit, the band's lone remaining bachelor has seen enough low points and weird left turns to know that *Make Believe* was not really going to be the end—"It's not the swan song Rivers wanted," he says—and tried to assure Shriner of as much as the tour was winding down. Even so, it was clear to all that for the band to continue, they would have to change how they operated on a fundamental level.

"I think we're the only band in the history of rock with a mission statement and a constitution," Bell says. "The Constitution of the United States of Weezer was drafted over a year ago in a way of making sure we stay true to our goals, and it kept us focused in a way we'd never been before. We have to prove to ourselves that we're still valid and that rock music is still valid."

No one will divulge any specific tenets of this sacred parchment, but a major one seems to concern the division of labor. While Cuomo has always been the band's de facto leader (and he admits he is publicly perceived as "the guy who wears glasses and is nerdy and whines a lot and is a control freak"), he was more than ready to share the burden. Everyone contributed songs and switched instruments, and the new album features two tracks that were never written nor sung by Rivers Cuomo: Bell's "Thought I Knew" and drummer Pat Wilson's "Automatic." A third, Cuomo's uncharacteristically creepy "Cold, Dark World," has Shriner on lead vocals.

This newfound equanimity was put to an early test: Rick Rubin, who'd produced *Make Believe*, once again offered his services. But after tracking only a handful of songs in early 2007, Rubin disappeared for reasons no one seems entirely clear on, nor particularly bitter about. "We didn't necessarily want to stop working with him," says Bell. "More like he stopped working with us." (Rubin declined a request to be interviewed for this story.)

The unexpected change of plans did force the band to adapt on the fly, so they decamped to a theater, the Malibu Performing Arts Center near Cuomo's house, to record on their own from July to September. A third session lasting ten days in February with Dublin-based producer Jacknife Lee, fresh off the recent R.E.M. album, proved so successful that Weezer have already locked him up for record number seven—very, very tentatively due for release in November 2009.

The members of Weezer, and certainly their ardent fan base, are quick to categorize each album as a reaction to what came previously—*Make Believe* was meant to correct the self-indulgence of 2002's *Maladroit*, which was meant to be more experimental than the meat-and-potatoes *Green Album*, which was meant to reassure fans after the quirkiness of *Pinkerton*, which was meant to shake things up after the blockbuster debut. But put the band's discography on shuffle for a casual listener, and the songs are all more similar than not. This hasn't stopped people from heralding the Red Album as a return to überchatty form. It's this consistency that's both allowed for Weezer's continued success and made them easy to take for granted in a fickle, flavor-of-the-half-hour marketplace.

"I honestly don't think that's a problem," says Luke Wood, who worked in Geffen's marketing department during the Blue Album period and is now, as a top Interscope executive, the band's most important champion. "They don't chase trends, and I hope they get rewarded for that. We hear a great album

with big hit songs, and how often do you get that? It's honey for bees."

"I would say we're probably more popular now than ever," says the Buffalo-bred Wilson, 39, who lives with his wife and their two kids in Canyon Lake, an hour south of L.A., "at least based on ticket sales. We're neither here nor there; we have our own universe. We exist between matter and antimatter. Perhaps I'm naive, but I think it's simple: If you just rock, people want the rock."

As he's been married for nearly all of Weezer's lifespan, Wilson's relative ease in mixing domestic tranquility with the insanity of life on the road is what ultimately proved to Cuomo that he might be able to do the same. "I never identified with the idea of I wanna be in a band because I want chicks." The whole lifestyle part of it, I don't get at all," Wilson says. "I've never even seen cocaine. Ever."

If the men of Weezer consider themselves impervious to seismic zeitgeist shifts, certainly some supporting evidence can be seen at *Spin*'s cover shoot on Venice Beach, where a quartet of tween girls (and their moms) excitedly take photos of the band. The Red Album's first two singles, "Pork and Beans" and "Troublemaker," effortlessly distill nose-thumbing teenage angst into undeniably hooky choruses. That they were crafted by a bunch of middle-age dudes in such a way that sounds honest, rather than pandering, is Weezer's greatest trick.

"In its purest form, rock is about the struggles of adolescence, and there's something about rock as an idea that illustrates that period of someone's life," says Interscope's Wood. "I feel like Rivers hasn't lost any sense of wonder about music or about its oppositional nature."

As much as Cuomo considers himself removed from L.A.'s entertainment factory, he may actually be its most accomplished Method actor: In order to properly relate to the misfit teenager, he must be a misfit teenager.

T WAS ALWAYS WEIRD being a kid and singing along to these Kiss lyrics about womanizing and having no idea what they were talking about. Then listening to Slayer and not being into Satan myself."

If the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ever presents an exhibit re-creating Rivers Cuomo's childhood bedroom, it might not look markedly different from the approximately eight- by 12-foot guest cottage in his backyard. Above the door hangs a wooden sign his older brother made in ninth grade: **PETER'S ROOM**. (Cuomo, who was raised on an ashram in Connecticut, went by the name Peter Kitts, after his stepfather, during his teenage years.) His old Kiss records are mounted on the walls in protective plastic sleeves, as is *Odyssey of Ika*, the LP by jazz saxophonist Wayne Shorter on which his father, Frank, played drums. His dad's old kit fills a third of the room. A few guitars hang from hooks; Cuomo takes down a particularly battered Fender.

"This was my first guitar," he says, handing it over for inspection. A Kiss logo and an inverted cross are gouged into the head and the neck, respectively. This guitar, given to him some 25 years ago, has been set on fire repeatedly, but of all its battle scars, the rust-colored smudges above the pickups stand out. "I would bite my fingers when concentrating really hard," he says. "That's blood."

Loose-leaf binders containing every song he's ever written, organized by year, line shelves, but he's particularly proud of his Nirvana notebook, in which he dissects their songs into patterns and formulas. For Cuomo, pop is always a riddle to be solved, something he idealizes even as he breaks it down to its mathematical essence. And his fascination with personal nostalgia is not relegated to fandom; Cuomo is in the midst of an self-examination, mining artifacts from his past and interviewing people he knew more than 15 years ago. Some of the old demos and snapshots were included in last year's *Alone: The Home Recordings of Rivers Cuomo*, but the real bounty will come with the memoir he's shopping to publishers, which focuses on his life between 1992 to 1994. As he grows comfortable, finally, with his own stature and status, it also becomes clearer that all of the tribulations Cuomo has wrestled with in his songs and otherwise—spiritual unfulfillment,



"I remember thinking, 'Man, I'm a rock star, I should be living the life.' But it's just not in my constitution. Maybe that's why we're still around."

—Rivers Cuomo

a bum leg, a broken home, sexual identity—perhaps none tortures him more than a lone tonorial choice made 15 years ago.

"The whole Weezer aesthetic was a negation of everything I'd stood for," Cuomo says, now sitting in his den. A map of the world covers one wall; pillows are clustered in the corner for meditation. "I was a passionate metalhead. I told my mom I was never going to cut my hair, and then right before the Blue Album photos were taken, I did and was a completely new person." He opens a Tupperware bin and wistfully sifts through a tangle of studded wristbands and belts and dingy bandannas from his glam days. "I was playing guitar in a band that sounded like Queensrÿche, then I made this sudden about-face that made a lot of people mad. I had a sinking feeling that it was so against my grain, but as it turns out, the repressed instincts from those times have surfaced in different ways."

Those ways have never been more apparent than on the Red Album—no fewer than four of its ten songs tackle the subject of rockness explicitly and self-reflexively. An artist who categorizes his default authorial voice as "emo complainer guy," Rivers Cuomo is fully embracing and even tweaking his quixotic public image for lyrical fodder. Rollicking album-opener "Troublemaker" boasts, "I'm gonna be a star and people will crane necks / To get a glimpse of me and see if I am having sex," while "Pork and Beans" wonders aloud whether enlisting Timbaland might help make the song a hit. "Heart Songs" shows its love in more obvious fashion, rattling off a laundry list of inspirational pop songs that misattributes the remake of "I Think We're Alone Now" to Debbie Gibson, rather than Tiffany. ("It was a mistake, but I decided to leave it in there," Cuomo says. "I hope they don't take it the wrong way—maybe they had problems like that back in the '80s, with people not being able to distinguish them.")

But the album's centerpiece is the cheeky grandiose "Greatest Man (Variations on a Shaker Hymn)," which tackles rock megalomania in the only way that makes sense: by exploding the sonic kitchen-sink of "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "A Quick One, While He's Away" to its logical, po-mo extreme. (It's hard to imagine the celibate, self-flagellating Cuomo of *Make Believe* delivering couplets like "You try to play cool like you just don't care / But soon I'll be playin' in your underwear" or "I got the money, and I got the fame / And you got the bots to ride on my plane.") Yet when asked if he thinks these songs are indeed reflective of a new outlook on his rock stardom, or on rock stardom in general, the man who spent, like, six pages deconstructing "Rape Me" seems surprised that anyone would give the context of his lyrics that sort of consideration. He pauses carefully and thoughtfully before answering even the simplest of questions, but he chews on this one an extra while.

"I don't know," he finally says. "From a creativity standpoint, I wanted to change who I am in the song....Being a rock star has meant many different things over the last 14 years. This is not what I was thinking of when I was in bed at night dreaming about being in Kiss; this is chill. In my 20s, I remember thinking, 'Man, I'm a rock star, I should be living the life.' I'd push myself, but it's just not in my constitution. Maybe that's why we're still around."

W

EEZER GATHER, along with their manager, Dan Field, at a photo shoot in Venice, staring at four potential Red Album covers on a laptop screen. A final selection was due yesterday, but they're not even close, so they're soliciting opinions from anyone they can find. The photos were taken in October, before the sessions with Jackknife Lee, "so we wouldn't have to make the decision last minute," Cuomo deadpans. If the band does have

a control freak in it, it'd be good if he stepped forward now.

Bell prefers the version with the band sitting, his legs stretching way into the foreground. Cuomo (and, as it turns out, the label) prefers the one in which he sports a black cowboy hat, a western shirt, and what appears to be a beer gut. A third features the four members frolicking in the ocean. The fourth has the guys clad in white surrounded by an angelic burst of light and is, as Cuomo says, "the one people seem to hate the least."

For all the talk of shifting industry paradigms, Weezer revel in their conventional approach. And while the band and the label were definitely at loggerheads when Cuomo circumvented the brass to mail out advance copies of *Maladroit* himself or to let fans select the track list, they're simpatico now. They need each other.

"You know, Trent Reznor says he's doing it without a label now, but he still has a bunch of people working for him," says Bell. "I feel lucky that there's a company that believes in our music and will promote it, and I believe that gives us an advantage. You need someone to have a plan. And all the young people I know in bands, they still want to get signed. It gives a sense of worth, it's something your parents can understand."

"The whole indie way of seeing things felt like a cliché to us at that point," Cuomo says of the band's early days. "We were like, 'No, we're going to sign to a major, we're gonna do this as corporately as possible.' That, to us, felt rebellious." Nor does Cuomo feel intimidated by a landscape that's changed drastically since. "I bet we could do it all over again—start a new band, hide our identities, figure out the right moves, and make it all over again. Sounds like a dare."

The band's immediate plans after the album's June release are typically murky. Bell thinks he's heard rumblings of shows in Japan later in the summer. But if collabo-crazy Cuomo's vision for the next Weezer tour comes to fruition, they won't be the ones doing the rocking out.

"I'd love to do really small shows, a few hundred people seated in the round, and the stage is loaded with all kinds of instruments and furniture and people hang out onstage and join in," Cuomo says. "Like a hootenanny. It's gonna be nuts."

But isn't he chomping at the bit to get out there and further indulge his inner rock star? The roaring, adoring crowd? The lights and the hubbub? All that crap?

Cuomo pauses. And then shrugs.

"I'm not much of a bit-chomper," he says. "But I'm sure it's gonna be killer." ☼



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SPECIAL REPORT

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A torrent of anti-emo violence has swept through Mexico, leaving battered bodies and hateful rhetoric in its brutal wake. But why there? Why now? And when will it end?

By **JOSEPH CONTRERAS**
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RAMIRO CHAVES



Punks and Metalheads

Emos

An all-too-common attitude is expressed at Mexico City's El Chopo market (far left); Jesús Soto (near left) fell victim to thugs after a party

victim knew neither her attackers nor her savior, but Nayeli believes she was targeted on the basis of her skintight jeans, slip-on Vans, and pink hair bow. "I've been living in fear ever since that day," says the high school student, who is barely five feet tall and declined to give her surname for fear of future reprisals. "I still go out—it's not like I'm in hiding—but I am afraid."

The episode is just one example of the escalating violence inside Mexico against emo fans, here commonly referred to as "emos." The wave of thuggery made national headlines after hundreds of youths pummeled a handful of emos on March 7 in the central Mexican city of Querétaro's main plaza, resulting in three injuries and 28 arrests. Eight days later, dozens of self-styled punks, "darks" (goths), and skaters marched on a plaza in Mexico City where emos gather daily, and the ensuing war of words eventually deteriorated into a rock-hurling, bottle-throwing melee before police arrived. Similar disturbances erupted that month in the northern city of Durango, leaving two injured and 80 in police custody. No deaths have been blamed on the emo-bashing to date, but the grainy cell-phone video images of terrified emos being cornered by a howling mob in downtown Querétaro have alarmed officials. "We are troubled by the fact that only violence seems to interest young people," says Adolfo Ortega Osorio, president of the Querétaro State human rights commission. "And while one can't generalize, this attraction is becoming increasingly obvious."

Though it's hard to explain the timing of the anti-emo campaign, the beef stems in part from a perception that emos—a relatively recent phenomenon in Mexico—are stealing elements, including fashion and music, from other urban tribes. Another factor that helps account for their persecution has resonated on schoolyards through the centuries: Almost without exception, emos tend to be younger, smaller, and scrawnier than their adversaries. "They're easy targets," says Leninn Zavala, a 17-year-old bassist in the emo band Heróline who boasts the typical 28-inch waistline and tips the scales at 123 pounds. "They can't defend themselves, and beating up an emo has become a kind of entertainment."

NAYELI HAD JUST SAID HER GOOD-BYES TO A friend and was about to descend the stairs into a Mexico City subway station when a shout pierced the evening air: "An emo!" Within moments, six youths had grabbed the 15-year-old from behind, wrestled her to the pavement, and begun kicking. Better known to her friends as Campanita ("the Little Bell"), Nayeli curled up in the fetal position as her assailants, four of whom were male, repeatedly stomped on her stomach and legs. The savage beating on the night of March 21 might have gone on longer if an older girl who happened to be passing by hadn't intervened. The

Other observers suggest different forces at work. Some point to a generalized climate of violence that is constantly fed by video games and frequent scuffling in the stands of soccer stadiums, while others interpret the attacks as one more symptom of the polarization that has divided Mexico since socially conservative President Felipe Calderón narrowly won a fiercely disputed election in 2006. Followers of the left-wing runner-up have alleged electoral fraud and vented their fury by occupying Mexico City thoroughfares, preventing Calderón's predecessor from delivering his final State of the Union address; and recently, leftist lawmakers staged a lockout in both chambers of the Mexican congress. Their example has been less than edifying for the nation's youth. "The ways in which we adults have resolved our differences in the last three or four years have acquired many forms of intolerance," says Emilio Álvarez Icaza Longoria, president of the Mexico City human rights commission. "This outburst of intolerance against a sector of the population is the byproduct of a fertile terrain that has been nurtured by political and ideological disputes."

Music fans have been involved in their fair share of clashes over the years (see sidebar on page 72). And street fights among rival youth groups are certainly nothing new south of the border. The hardscrabble barrios of Mexico City played host to gangs with names like the Tarzans and the Pachucos in the 1940s. The '70s witnessed the arrival of the Cubans, the Nazis, and the Arabs, and they in turn were succeeded by the Chavos Banda (Gang Boys) in the '80s.

But the latest spasm of brutality have been sparked by two distinctive ingredients. One is old-fashioned homophobia, which has dogged fans of emo worldwide but is especially rampant in Mexico's culture of machismo. For many non-emo youths, the androgynous look favored by many emos leads to assumptions that they're all gay. That take was amplified by a Mexican VJ named Kristoff, who unleashed a profanity-laced tirade on the cable TV channel Telehit that labeled emos a useless bunch of pubescent girls. The prevailing political climate in some locales doesn't help matters. "In those cities governed by the far right," notes Javier Hidalgo Ponce, director of the Mexico City municipal government's Youth Institute, "the environment is even more homophobic."

What separates the current rash of fighting from the gang warfare of yesteryear is the use of the Internet to muster the troops. In the days leading up to the beatings in Querétaro, hate-mongering bloggers urged readers to purge that city's Plaza de Armas of emos and posted drawings of severed heads. In a matter of days, the all-too-enthusiastic response elicited by these exhortations inspired copycats in other parts of the country. A Durango-based blogger named Eko wrote about plans to launch an organized fight in that city on March 12, and hordes of high school and university students answered his call 48 hours later. Around that same time, unknown individuals in the Pacific Coast state of Colima posted the following message on YouTube: "Let us join forces with our countrymen in Querétaro, let's cleanse Mexico, let's cleanse Colima and make it a better place for all." It was signed, "The Death to the Emos Association."



Clockwise from top: Emos congregate at Mexico City's Insurgentes plaza; anti-emo youth raise a ruckus at a confrontation on March 29; at a pro-tolerance rally on March 19, a young woman says, "I'm emo and so what?"

ON AFTERNOONS THE OPEN-AIR market known as El Chopo becomes a veritable smorgasbord of alternative youth culture in Mexico City. Among the stalls where vendors hawk T-shirts, vintage LPs, and all manner of fashion accessories, glowering punks with dyed mohawks mingle with dorks in thick-soled black lace-up boots and leather biker pants. For their part, both Zavala and bandmate Daniel "Sugus" Cruz have arrived in full emo regalia—low-slung, straight-leg jeans, chains dangling from their belts, untied black sneakers, and assorted wristbands and lip rings. Yet this pair of fresh-faced emos exchange handshakes with a number of acquaintances from other groups without the slightest sign of tension or self-consciousness.

El Chopo was the setting for one of two public confrontations in the Mexican capital that involved emo kids earlier this year. On the last Saturday in March, hundreds of emos, gays, and their supporters led a pro-tolerance demonstration through the streets of Mexico City. But as the marchers approached the market, they were blocked by an angry crowd of punks, skinheads, and dorks who showered them with

insults and bottles. The 200-plus police in riot gear who accompanied the marchers averted an outbreak of physical violence. But the presence of black-clad punks among the counterdemonstrators was duly reported in local newspaper accounts the next day and reinforced the widespread impression of running battles among the city's high-profile youth movements.

Some victims of isolated anti-emo violence challenge such media accounts, noting that their assailants were dressed "normally" and had none of the accessories or hairstyles associated with the city's various youth tribes. Viridiana González was walking along Mexico City's Insurgentes Boulevard early one Friday evening with another teenage girl when two apparently drunk young women pummeled them while shouting anti-emo epithets. There was nothing unusual about their clothing, says Viridiana, a raven-haired 14-year-old middle-schooler who resembles a young Amy Winehouse. The bruises and scrapes on her daughter's face infuriated Angélica González, a high school administrator. "It really bothered me, because I felt this great sense of imposture anger," she says. "I support Viridiana 100 percent, because every person should be free to decide what to do with their lives."

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Other emos encounter far less solidarity on the home front. Nayeli tried to conceal from her mother any physical evidence of the battering she suffered outside the subway station for fear of the riot act that was eventually read to her. Jesús Soto was attacked after a birthday party went sour; the 18-year-old student got an earful from his parents during a three-week convalescence. "They scolded me for going out on the street like this," recalls the lanky Soto, who sports oversized aviator sunglasses, viable Vans, and a mop of spiky black hair. "I told them this is the way I am; I'm not going to change in order to suit other people or to avoid anything bad happening to me."

American musicians have also voiced their frustration. At a recent concert in Mexico City, My Chemical Romance frontman Gerard Way told the crowd: "Recently we've been hearing a lot of stuff about some violence here in your country having to do with kids who want to wear black T-shirts...or some kind of bullshit stuff like that. We don't want to see any fucking violence. We came here for one reason, and that's to be at the fucking rock show."

Yet for every defender who rallies to their cause, there are plenty of detractors who dismiss emos as apolitical posers who put fashion above all other considerations and cherry-pick attitudes and musical styles from other genres. "It's just a fad. It has no ideology," says Diego Villalba, 17, a high school student who went through an emo phase for six months last year before shedding his long hair and close-fitting jeans for the baseball cap and baggy shorts he now wears. "It isn't something that deserves to be taken seriously."

"I reject their ideology, their apathy, their conformity," says Arturo Padilla, a 17-year-old punk from the Mexico City suburb of Ixtapalapa, who on one April afternoon wore a black T-shirt that read in Spanish the INJUSTICES RAIN DOWN LIKE NIGHTMARES. "But the violence against them can't

"THEY'RE COPYING STYLES AND WAYS OF THINKING THAT ALREADY EXIST. THE EMOS ARE ROBBING THE IDENTITY OF OTHERS. I APPROVE OF PEOPLE WHO F--K THEM UP."

—A 20-year-old metalhead

be justified. You shouldn't attack emos physically; you should attack them with your mind."

Other critics are considerably less restrained. "They're copying styles and ways of thinking that already exist," says Carlos Navarro, a 20-year-old metalhead. "The sociologists say we don't understand emos because they're not the same as us, but that's not true. The emos are robbing the identities of others, and the metalheads and the punks don't want them around. I approve of the people who fuck them up."

When the pro-tolerance marchers approached the entrance to the El Chopo marketplace under police escort in late March, some of the assembled punks and skinheads chanted "Fucking emo kids" and "Emo isn't culture, faggots, you won't always be protected." Others told the demonstrators to go back to Polanco, one of the ritziest neighborhoods in the Mexican capital. And even as Heroine's Zavala and Cruz were pooh-poohing the news media's depiction of urban tribes as young misfits hell-bent on busting heads, an aging punk sauntered around El Chopo on a recent afternoon in a black T-shirt that depicted an extended forearm and razor blade beneath a sentence in English that read, REMEMBER EMO-KIDS...IT'S "DOWN THE ROAD" NOT "ACROSS THE STREET"—a not-so-subtle dig at the alleged penchant of emos for superficial wrist-slashing instead of the vein-slitting that would really put their lives at risk.



HE CIRCULAR PLAZA ATOP THE

Ingenues subway station is ground zero for Mexico City's emo community. A seedy, litter-strewn crossroads for office workers, bored teenagers, and the homeless, the plaza brings

back memories of Times Square and Piccadilly Circus before gentrification reared its shiny head. The emo kids start to converge in the late afternoon, passing cigarettes and chatting about the latest music and gossip amid the Internet cafés, pizza stands, and drugstores that line the outdoor space.

The mood in the plaza on this April afternoon has lightened considerably since the tense days of March. The left-leaning government of Mayor Marcelo Ebrard has lent the emos a sympathetic ear and hosted meetings to encourage dialogue among some of the city's rival youth groups. As the first municipal jurisdiction to legalize same-sex civil unions, Mexico City might be expected to provide a hospitable environment to the emos. But elsewhere in the country, too, a number of online calls to mount fresh attacks on local emos failed to trigger much of a reaction. The worst may be over, at least for now. "There may be some more attacks, but they'll be on a smaller scale," predicts Sugus Cruz. "People are backpedaling, and the large-scale confrontations won't happen again." ☼



MORE AT SPIN.COM For videos and more photos, go to www.spin.com/emo-riots

THE CLASHES

The stories behind other violent rock rivalries

BY DAVID MARCHESE



English mods do the stomp in 1964.

Mods ⚡ Rockers

Leave it to those class-conscious Brits to beat each other up over clothing. The early 1960s saw skirmishes for the scooter-riding, skinny-trousered mods and the motorcycle-mad, blue-jeaned rockers. The most notorious throwdown took place May 1964 in the seaside resort town of Brighton and inspired a Stray Cats number ("Rumble in Brighton") and the Who's rock opera *Quadrophenia*.

Punks ⚡ Skins

Lousy with disaffected youth, England's late-'70s punk explosion provided fertile recruiting grounds for thuggish outfits like the neo-fascist National Front. A love of loud guitars and gobbing meant that punks and skinheads ended up at a lot of the same shows. Gang of Four guitarist Andy Gill has recalled the gigs thusly: "Chairs flying everywhere, people getting hit, glasses getting smashed." Like a Wild West saloon, then. Only pastier.

Rock ⚡ Disco

Now largely understood as thinly veiled homophobia and racism, anti-disco vitriol—stoked by constant "Disco sucks!" carping by rock-radio DJs and cries of "Sellout!" lobbed at bandwagon jumpers like the Rolling Stones and Kiss—exploded, literally, during "Disco Demolition Night" at Chicago's Comiskey Park on July 12, 1979, when 20,000 disco albums were detonated at a White Sox doubleheader and rock fans ran riot.

Norwegian Black Metal ⚡ Swedish Black Metal

These Scandinavian scare-mongers spent the early '90s debating whose scene was more evil. Things got so tense that when Euronymous, guitarist for Norway's Mayhem, was found murdered in 1993, Oslo police issued a statement casting suspicion upon the band's neighboring rivals. Even after it turned out a Swede wasn't responsible, the Norwegians didn't apologize. Now, that's evil.

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VILL
PEOP

America's favorite ballpark sing-along is actually (gasp!) a disco anthem about gay sex. Or is it? On the 30th anniversary of the Village People smash, we get the full story from the folks who'd know best: the cowboy, the construction worker...

"Y.M.C.A."

(An Oral History)

By Jeff Pearlman

Photo-illustration by Sean McCabe

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HENRI BELOLO (music producer, from a 2000 interview with *Disco-disco.com*): [In 1975] I was talking to the gay community about what they liked, what they wanted to listen to musically, and what was their dream, their fantasy. One day [producer Jacques Morali and I] were walking in the streets of New York. I remember clearly it was down in the Village, and we saw an Indian walking down the street and heard the bells on his feet. We followed him into a bar. He was a bartender—he was serving and also dancing on the bar. And while we were watching him dancing and sipping our beer, we saw a cowboy watching him dance. And Jacques and I suddenly had the same idea. We said, "My God, look at those characters." So we started to fantasize about what were the characters of America. The mix, you know, of the American man.... And we named it the Village People.

The pair placed an ad that called for *MACHO TYPES WITH MUSTACHE*, eventually filling the roles of cowboy, cop, construction worker, soldier, leather-clad biker, and Indian. David Hodo, a 28-year-old struggling singer and actor, responded immediately.

DAVID HODO: I had just finished a musical about the Grand Ole Opry, and I had a mustache. It was Christmastime, and I needed money. They wanted a cowboy, and I had just finished a western—perfect. But when they said they wanted me to be the construction worker, that was my dad's dream come true. I'm handy, but I've never built anything of consequence.

Victor Willis, who had starred in one of the original productions of The Wiz, would be the lead singer, a cop. A toll collector named Glenn Hughes was the leatherman. Alex Briley originally dressed as a soldier (but switched to a Navy ensign's uniform when performing the group's 1979's hit "In the Navy"). Dancer Felipe Rose, born to a Lakota Sioux father,

was, naturally, the Indian. Randy Jones, a singer raised on a North Carolina farm, became the cowboy.

Morali had sold hit-churning label Casablanca (home to Donna Summer and Kiss) on the concept of this boy band even before the roles were cast. The group's first album, 1977's *Village People*, featured the disco hit "San Francisco (You've Got Me)." The title track of the following year's *Macho Man* debuted (and peaked) at No. 25 on the charts but later became a gay touchstone.

RANDY JONES: Something just clicked with us. We had that spark. Victor was a terrific singer: He had the style of Teddy Pendergrass. He was married to Phyllicia Rashad. But we didn't start as a gay group, and not everyone in the group was gay—that's an incorrect notion. So much of our music was played in black, Latin, and gay underground clubs; that's where the first Village People album found its initial audience.

HODO: It was 1977, and we were leaving a photography session on 23rd Street. Jacques Morali saw



the big pink YMCA on 23rd and asked, "What is this YMCA, anyway?" And after laughing at his accent, we told him the Y was a place where you could go when you first came to New York when you didn't have any money—you can stay there for very little. And of course, someone joked, "Yeah, but don't bend over in the showers." And Jacques, bless his heart, said, "I will write a song about this!"

JONES: David's a little off. Yeah, Jacques came up with the idea. But what happened is that when I moved to New York in 1975, I joined the McMurray YMCA on 23rd Street. I took Jacques there three or four times in 1977, and he loved it. He was fascinated by a place where a person could work out with weights, play basketball, swim, take classes, and get a room. Plus, with Jacques being gay, I had a lot of friends I worked out with who were in the adult-film industry, and he was impressed by meeting people he had seen in the videos and magazines. Those visits with me played a seed in him, and that's how he got the idea for "Y.M.C.A."—by literally going to the YMCA.

NODO: We had finished our [third] album, *Cruisin'*, and we needed one more song as a filler. Jacques wrote "Y.M.C.A." in about 20 minutes—the melody, the chorus, the outline. Then he gave it to Victor Willis and said, "Fill in the rest." I was a bit skeptical about some of our hits, but the minute I heard "Y.M.C.A.," I knew we had something special. Because it sounded like a commercial. And everyone likes commercials.

JONES: It was not intended as a gay anthem. Do you have the lyrics in front of you? There's nothing

gay about them. I think Victor wrote the words, but it's all a big fucking mystery. The guy who really deserves the credit is Horace Ott, who arranged the horns and strings. Jacques had the ideas, but Horace transformed them into songs.

HORACE OTT: What I loved about "Y.M.C.A." was, to be honest, everything. Great beat, great voice with Victor, great timing in the midst of the disco boom. Now, was it a gay song? I don't know. It certainly appealed to a lot of people who embraced that lifestyle.

HODO: "Y.M.C.A." certainly has a gay origin. That's what Jacques was thinking when he wrote it, because our first album [1977's *Village People*] was possibly the gayest album ever. I mean, look at us. We were a gay group. So was the song written to celebrate gay men at the YMCA? Yes. Absolutely. And gay people love it.

LEAH POWW (media relations manager, Young Men's Christian Association): We at the YMCA celebrate the song. It's a positive statement about the YMCA and what we offer to people all around the world.

The song's undeniable, jinglelike hook made it a natural candidate for a single; it debuted on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart on November 11, 1978, and peaked 13 weeks later at No. 2. On January 6, 1979, the Village People appeared on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, TV's biggest pop-music showcase.

JONES: We were flying up from South America for the show, and we worked on the choreography on the airplane—handclaps, turning, marching in

place...stuff like that. Well, the audience at this particular taping was a bunch of kids bused in from a cheerleader camp. The first time we got to the chorus, we were clapping our hands above our heads. And the kids thought it looked like we were making a Y. So they automatically did the letters. We saw this and started doing letters with them. It was purely audience-generated, which is probably why it's still so popular. And that's great for me, because it keeps the checks coming in every six months.

HODO: When I saw the movements, I thought, "Wow, that is so stupid." Then everyone in America started doing it, and I thought, "Wow, that is so brilliant." It took on a life of its own. The next thing we know, Hideki Saijo has the No. 1 hit in Japan with his version of "Y.M.C.A." and we hit No. 2 [in the U.S.]. That's how it always works. Saijo claimed to have invented the dance, so as soon as we got to Japan, we straightened him out.

"Y.M.C.A." spent 26 weeks on Billboard's top 100 (during which time the actual YMCA threatened to sue the band before dropping the lawsuit), but due largely to egos and personality clashes, the Village People quickly crumbled. Willis left the band in 1979, just before they were to start work on the feature film Can't Stop the Music. He was replaced by Ray Simpson, one of the group's backup singers and the brother of Ashford & Simpson's Valerie Simpson. The movie (starring Steve Guttenberg as "Jack Morell" and ex-Olympian Bruce Jenner) bombed, as did the soundtrack album.

Three more studio albums came and went with barely a whimper; Willis returned briefly to contribute to 1982's *Fox on the Box*. He also recorded an unreleased solo album and struggled with substance abuse. By the end of '85, the Village People—who eventually sold a reported 65 million albums—gave up.

JONES: I left for the first time in '81, when the group went in a different direction. But I kept getting royalties. Then I was the only one doing any kind of performing. [When the group broke up], Glenn was working in a camera store, David was a bartender, Alex was working in an office, Felipe was a secretary. It was sad—these were talented men who were once atop the world and deserved a chance to continue their craft.

The Village People regrouped in 1987, but not to record new material. They were proudly and officially a nostalgia act, available for weddings, bar mitzvahs, and corporate events.

HODG: Bar mitzvahs used to be our bread and butter, everywhere from the Pierre Hotel to backyards. But we haven't played one in five or six years, because now the parents grew up in the '80s, not the '70s. **REQ** Speedwagon does bar mitzvahs instead of us.

ROGER BENNETT (coauthor, Bar Mitzvah Disco): "Y.M.C.A." is the single most important song to the Jewish religion since "Hava Nagila." And paradoxically, not one of the Village People is Jewish. But they did play a critical function, providing a slew of new role models for Jewish youth. We were under such pressure to become bankers, accountants, and lawyers. They opened our eyes to other career possibilities: a cop, a builder, a flamboyant Indian...

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In February 1996, five years after Morali's death from AIDS, a onetime aspiring priest from Tampa, Florida, the son-in-law of Yankees owner George Steinbrenner, changed everything.

JOSEPH MOLLOY (former general partner, New York Yankees): It was the opening of Legends Field, our spring-training stadium in Tampa, and a couple of the grounds crew guys approached me with the idea of bringing a little excitement to the exhibition games. In the middle of the fifth inning, when they dragged the infield, the guys wanted to do the arm motions to "Y.M.C.A." I hadn't heard the song for a long, long time, but the crowd absolutely loved it. I thought, "Hmmm, this might work in New York."

On April 9, 1996, the Yankees opened at home against the Kansas City Royals. With a driving snowstorm battering players and fans alike, five Yankee Stadium groundskeepers began their customary walk to clean the infield in the middle of the fifth inning. Then, from the speakers, a familiar horn riff and disco beat kicked in.

JUAN GONZALEZ (from his New York Daily News column, October 29, 1996): They began to dance, strut, and gyrate around second base while they dragged the field. The capacity crowd roared with approving laughter. We all cheered and applauded, and for a moment we all felt a little warmer inside. It was baseball poking fun at itself, reminding us all that this huge, multibillion-dollar, cutthroat business is, after all, about people having a good time.

MOLLOY: I remember looking at [Yankees] Wade Boggs and Derek Jeter and seeing them swaying to the music. When those grounds crew guys dropped their rakes and performed, you had to watch. From the owner's box, I would do the Y-M-C-A motions with the crowd. I should have trademarked it.

MICHAEL MUSTO (columnist, The Village Voice): "Y.M.C.A." is one of many cultural phenomena that started as a gay in-joke and eventually became stripped of its winkiness and subsumed by the mainstream. Back in the '70s, the masses did those crazy hand gestures along with the song, truly thinking it was an upbeat number about how nice the Y is, but at least the sophisticated crowd was plugged into the real meaning. The Studio 54 set knew full well the Village People were a campy assortment of gay stereotypes nodding to the gays with coded sexual allusions and macho posturing.

MOLLOY: "Y.M.C.A." is about homosexuality? I had no idea until this very moment. Wow! Well, it's a great song that makes people feel good. That's what's important.

Not long after Yankee Stadium made "Y.M.C.A." a fifth-inning staple (which is still being done 12 seasons later), other teams took notice. Also in '96, the Oakland Coliseum was undergoing a \$200 million renovation. As an A's fan batted at the plate, trying to concentrate while, say, Randy Johnson unleashed a 97-mph inside fastball, the noise from bulldozers and jackhammers filled the air.

DAVID RINETTI (vice president of stadium operations, Oakland A's): We wanted to do something cool to

"When I saw the dance, I thought, 'WOW, THAT IS SO STUPID.' Then everyone started doing it, and I thought, 'WOW, THAT IS SO BRILLIANT.'"

—David Hodo



Y? Because we like you! Yankees groundskeepers in Tampa and fans at Yankee Stadium express themselves through dance.

make the most of a terrible time. So we dressed two guys up as construction workers and sent them out to the construction site. Then we'd have two of our security guards go out there and pretend to tell them to stop making so much noise. Everyone [in the crowd] believed it—then "Y.M.C.A." would come on and the four of them would break out into dance. One of our security guards was a guy named Icebox who played in the local roller-disco league. He was a huge man, and when he danced...

ROBERT "ICEBOX" SMITH (Oakland Coliseum security guard): I tore that place up. The A's weren't so hot that year, but we brought that house down every single night. It was magical. We were on ESPN for weeks. It was a gay song?

Fans ate it up—some even came dressed as the characters. Teams would host Village People Nights, capped off by postgame concerts—often by the Village People themselves.

OR. COSTAS KARAGEORGHIS (sports psychologist, London's Brunel University): When you think of using music to engage a crowd and increase cohesion, "Y.M.C.A." is the perfect track. It turns a group of individuals into a unit, just like the wave, simply because of a common action. I haven't heard it played at rugby, though—probably too butcher.

KYLE SMITH (director of stadium operations, Brevard County Manatee): There are a handful of songs that just make you get up and dance. At our ballpark, "Y.M.C.A." has to be considered one of them. "Y.M.C.A." is a gay song? Honestly, I had no clue.

CAMERON HARRIS (Wally the Warthog mascot, Winston-Salem Warthogs): I'm the only mascot I know who does the whole Y-M-C-A hand gesture thing while standing on his head. As soon as the first beats come out of the speakers, everyone in the stands is asking, "Where's Wally? Where's that wild Wally?" Not sure what you mean about it being a gay song.... I know the Y is a healthy place to exercise.

MUSTO: All these years later, the gay subtext is gone, and it's a rah-rah crowd-pleaser for the baseball stadium crowd. It happens. A rallying song for the oppressed turns into a middle-of-the-road spirit-lifter, mainly because the straights like to steal things from the gays, take away all the scary edge, and make it their own.

TIM WILES (director of research, Baseball Hall of Fame): The song is not alone in coming way out of left field. [Ramones' "Blitzkrieg Bop"] is played in a lot of ball parks, and someone said to me once, "If Joey Ramone knew this was being played at games, he'd roll over in his grave."

BRIAN JOHNSON (former major-league catcher): I'm not sure you can have a game without playing "Y.M.C.A." The funny thing is, every ballplayer I know has heard the song a thousand times, but how many of them know it has to do with gay men at the Y? One percent, maybe? But that's baseball players—not the most informed when it comes to music.

BRANDON MCCARTHY (pitcher, Texas Rangers): I have no idea how "Y.M.C.A." got popular or how it has remained so. If I had earplugs, I'd put them in every time that song came on.

J.P. HOWELL (pitcher, Tampa Bay Rays): I hate "Y.M.C.A." I've been over it since I first heard it.

JONES: We made a mark in pop music but an even deeper impression in pop culture. People remember Donna Summer, Kiss, the Bee Gees, but they didn't have the same impact on pop culture that the Village People did.

BELOLO (from disco-disco.com): In life, you discover that an invention is not always one man or two men; it's a combination of people putting their love together. "Y.M.C.A." became a standard that will stay forever.

HODO: The real genius of "Y.M.C.A." is that it can be taken any way you want. We were once on a television show in England, and the hostess said, "Now, this is a gay song, isn't it?" And I said, "No, actually it's a Christian song—the Young Men's Christian Association." I mean, honey, isn't it obvious? ☺

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Let's Get Lost

FORMER TECHNO MADMAN **JAMIE LIDELL** HAD TO
TRAVEL THE WORLD TO FIND HIS [VINTAGE] SOUL

BY PHILIP SHERBURNE

Sitting in an empty Berlin hotel dining room, Jamie Lidell is loudly clad in a torn black tuxedo with frilly white shirt and a baby-blue waistcoat, methodically wiping away a fine film of white powder—no, not *that* kind. Lidell lives nearby, in the immigrant-heavy Kreuzberg neighborhood, but the U.K. native still feels out of place, even when he's not made up for a photo shoot. He moved here in 1999 “for *human*,” but the way he draws out the word tells you how that ended up. And like most of the city's expat musicians, his command of the language is severely limited. “I got to a point where I’m like, ‘Look, I’m not going to get this, and I’m probably going to leave,’” he says.

Lidell, who has talked of moving to Paris or back to the U.K., also enthuses about New York and Los Angeles. “Berlin is a tragic, decadent sort of place. I’ve come to understand that and love it. But also fear it.” It’s not hard to understand his fear: Berlin is notorious for its culture of 24/7 party people, of Friday nights that run into Sunday afternoon, and Lidell—both a hedonist dandy and a rampant self-doubter—has a fraught relationship with temptation. He spent a recent press week in Manhattan happily sloshing back champagne cocktails at the SoHo Grand.

In Berlin, he’s moodier, beating himself up over past tribulations, like the dissolution of Super Collider, his avant-soul duo with Chilean-English techno maverick Cristian Vogel. “We were actually on the verge of something, and I left [England] and screwed it up,” he says. “I don’t know why I did that.”

Despite Lidell’s restlessness, this is a promising time for the singer/producer. While 2005’s *Multiply* moved only 22,000 copies in the U.S., the title track was eventually included on the *Grey’s Anatomy* soundtrack. And where *Multiply* often sounded like a blatant vintage-soul pastiche—not unlike a male version of Amy Winehouse’s *Back to Black*—Lidell’s new full-length, *Jim*, puts the emphasis on polished, arranged tunes that are lithe, limber toms uniting Stevie Wonder, D’Angelo, and Van Morrison.

Lidell has also been keeping busy company. Credited as “Energy Arranger,” he collaborated on “So Sorry” off Feist’s album *The Reminder* and recently toured and recorded with Beck. In L.A., he met Columbia chief Rick Rubin, and though a deal never materialized, the meeting boosted Lidell, who clearly seeks affirmation. “He was like, ‘This record is a lot better than *Multiply*. It’s better produced, it’s better thought-out, the vocal performances are really solid.’ I didn’t know whether it was any good. Parts of me are like, ‘Why can’t I ever capture my own part?’”

By his “other part,” he presumably means his mellower, singer/songwriter side—an aspect of Lidell’s personality that has generally gone neglected in his madcap dash from rare underground to the edge of the mainstream. To support *Jim*, Lidell is touring with a full band, but he remains best known for his unhinged solo performance style, wearing caps, leopard-print bathrobes, and even a suit made out of film stock. Punching at keyboards, assorted gear boxes, and a laptop running self-designed software instruments, he whips up a maelstrom of beats, croons, shrieks, and howls, improvised and looped on a sampler in real time.

Lidell has had a lifelong propensity for extremes. Of raving at 16 years old, he says, “It was drugs, for me. This full-on, shamanic transition to adulthood: *Blitz yourself*. I wouldn’t go out for the music, because the music wasn’t music. That was

the cool thing about it: The songs didn’t start and end with people going [*mimics an audience clapping politely*].” He got his start with London’s mid-’90s Subhead collective, which threw illegal parties in abandoned office blocks and, once, a submarine. His first album for London’s Warp label (which still releases his records) was 2000’s *Muddlin Gear*, an abrasive spray of digitally mangled rhythms.

But it was his work with Super Collider and Vogel—who now runs a Barcelona recording studio and makes uncompromising techno for Berlin label Tresor—that suggested Lidell’s future. “Me and Cristian were both meticulous bastards, but we worked well together,” says Lidell. “He’s a major talent. When I worked out how he was doing his music, I was like, ‘Christ, it’s insane!’ It’s just numbers going past on the [computer] screen; it looked like he was trying to hack into this war-games thing. He’s like, ‘F32. 4. A’—just typing in letters, and numbers and bears come flying out.” The duo’s live shows, with a cameraman wearing a miner’s headlamp and Super 8 footage projected onto the performers’ bodies, were as manic and risky as anything electronic music has produced.

That Lidell today is very much about songs, thick with honeyed vocal harmonies and woozy organs, effortlessly balancing verse, chorus, and bridge, owes to a parallel path of his youth. “I had a band at school all the time; I used to play guitar, try and get my Hendrix on,” he says with a laugh. But his attachment to American R&B of the ’60s and ’70s reflects a stronger universal nostalgia. “Growing up, in almost any country in the developed world, you hear Berry Gordy’s influence. *Motown!* It’s such a crucial part of adolescence. I always made out with girls with Motown on, because it was so sexy. That was the sweetest shit I knew.”

Much of the sweetness of *Jim*, recorded in Paris, Berlin, and Los Angeles, comes from longtime collaborators Mocky (Dominic Salole) and Gonzales (Jason Beck), Canadians who have also worked with Peaches and Feist. Lidell brought melodic sketches to the studio, and the three hammered out versions by trial and error—recording a song faster, slower, more urgent, more subdued. But one of the album’s strongest cuts, “Another Day,” grew out of “getting really pissed one night,” confesses Lidell. “One night I got a bottle of Laphroaig [scotch] and drank the whole bottle. I was so gone! I had the recording setup in my bedroom. I was in a really good mood, almost falling asleep. I wanted to be drawing on shit that wasn’t conscious, those novel thoughts and crazy connections you get, things you wouldn’t think possible just sitting there with a pen and paper. I wrote the whole song in one stream of consciousness. It was weird, like a folk song—sounded like fucking Beck meets Simon & Garfunkel.”

Lidell admits the album might never have happened without his partners. “I need to orbit around other characters and motivators,” he says, his voice becoming more somber as he fusses with a package of nuts from the hotel bar. “I’m quite a wayward, lost guy.” But he also seems to thrive on being lost. I bring up a 2004 solo performance in Montreal when it was obvious Lidell had no idea where he was going—one lengthy “song” found him berating the soundman over a shuddering beatbox loop.

“There weren’t really any songs that night, no,” Lidell says, perking up. “And I loved that. Because among the chaos there’s real gold.” ☼



Photographed for
Sells in Berlin,
March 22, 2009





The brother
in question:
Tusilove keeps
an eye out for
stealthy bloggers.

With both relevant and obscure history buzzing through his afro, the Roots' **?uestlove** has been revising hip-hop's rule book for 15 years. He's also the genre's go-to quote machine, dropping pearls like dimes. "Obama," he says, "is the new De La Soul."

By **CHARLES AARON**

Photograph by **STEVEN BRAHMS**

Ahmir "?uestlove" Thompson is pop music's visionary B-boy auteur. And the fact that he isn't a rapper or a flashy DJ or a producer with a signature sound makes his accomplishments even more striking. The son of Arthur Lee Andrew Thompson, leader of 1950s doo-wop group Lee Andrews & the Hearts (and grandson of a member of gospel legends the Dixie Hummingbirds), he was bandleading his dad's revival act at age 13. As the Roots' drummer and coleader with MC Tariq "Black Thought" Trotter since the early 1990s—and collaborator with D'Angelo, Common, Erykah Badu, N.E.R.D., TV on the Radio, and many others—the Philadelphia native has transformed hip-hop by

incorporating live instrumentation, jazz, soul, and rock influences, and most presciently, the Internet (cofounding the Okayplayer website back in 1999).

Lounging on a sofa at Legacy Studios in Manhattan's theater district, ?uestlove, 37, is groggy after a flight from Los Angeles, where he attended Quentin Tarantino's birthday party. But he's still full of voluble opinions on music, history, and politics, showing more insight and wit than most of the music journalists he faithfully follows and challenges. After we run out of time—the Roots crew file in to rehearse for a college tour promoting their just-released eighth album, *Rising Down* (Def Jam)—he calls two days later to chat some more.



From far left: Kid Crumbs, Josh Abrams, Black Thought, and ?uestlove tear up the Philly streets, 1992; Stevie Wonder revolutionizes hip-hop on *The Cosby Show*; standing guard over his 37,000 records



You were in show business at an early age, and your dad was really strict and wanted you to go to Juilliard and play jazz. Did you ever have Jackson-family feelings of your childhood being stolen?

No, I don't think I missed anything. Point blank, everyone on my block is either dead or in jail. No—one kid, Gregory, he made it. And the fact that I was surprised he was still alive is a sad commentary. I'm glad I didn't go out on my block, 'cause I would've been a whole other person. I probably would've been the geek who got beaten up.

What street did you live on in Philly?

A street that became very famous and very political—Osage Avenue. It gained its notoriety on May 13, 1985, when there was a confrontation between this organization called MOVE, which was a radical political movement, and our mayor, W. Wilson Goode. His solution was to drop a bomb on top of their house; it spread and took out six blocks, and if they hadn't gotten it under control, we probably would have been one of those blocks.

What were your days growing up like?

Okay, here's a funny story that connects with the Jacksons. You remember the year Michael won all those awards for *Thriller* [1984]? Well, that was really during the strictest practice period of my life. So if I wasn't after home from school by the weather-update mark of *Oprah*, it was my ass—one minute after, [my parents would] be like, "You went to the arcade, didn't you?" From four to six was strictly homework, then seven

was dinner and dishes, then eight until 11 was practice. I had to beg my dad to watch the Grammys, because that took two hours out of our very tight regimen. So he reluctantly agreed. I had to prepare a month in advance, just to make sure no grades were bad, I wasn't talking in class, none of that. He started calling my teachers: "He's doing all his work, right?" Now, this was also the year of Wynton Marsalis, but because Michael won those eight awards, people hardly celebrated that Wynton won a jazz award and a classical award. But when Wynton won, the first thing he said was, "You know, I just really want to thank my father, Ellis, for forcing me to practice my skills five hours a day." And my dad heard that shit and was beside himself: "I knew it! Five hours!"

You and Tariq went to a Fame-type school [Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts] where the musical emphasis was on playing and singing, not hip-hop—but then, the local hip-hop scene wasn't really open to what you were doing with live instruments. Did you feel like you were left out on your own?

That's how we ended up playing on the street.

This was on South Street in Philly?

Yeah, at first it was just Tariq freestyling and me banging on buckets, New York style, but I was also attending Settlement Music School [a local community arts institution] with this guy Josh Abrams, who became the Roots' first bass player. He suggested that we bring our real instruments

out there, and he had a station wagon to help us haul everything down. For black musicians at that time [in the early '90s], the only social infrastructure you had was the church or jam sessions in jazz clubs. These hip-hop guys would have demos, but that was just for rappers, not for bands. We were still part band, part rapper. We never saw it as a novelty or an angle; I just knew how to drum better than I knew how to program. I was trying to sample stuff, but just for shits and giggles, because the records in my father's collection were all over the hip-hop records I was listening to—the *Headhunters* "God Make Me Funky," [the *Honeydrippers*] "Impeach the President," *Mandrill* and the *Meters* albums.

Did you have any real recording equipment?

I had my dad's broken-down four-track machine and a little Casio SK-1 sampler. After *The Cosby Show*, when Stevie Wonder was on [in 1986], everybody had to have one of those. Bill Cosby really jump-started hip-hop culture. That one *Cosby* episode, every well-known producer I know, that's the event that changed their lives, but everybody is just ashamed to say it. That was the first time America got to see a sampler.

That's wild, considering how Cosby has made it one episode to blame hip-hop for destroying black youth.

It's his own fault. He never should've had Stevie on.

So anyway, the Roots built up a following from performing on the street, and before long, you were recording and playing in Europe and, in 1993, cutting a deal with Geffen. What was the climate when you signed?

We signed in the year of [Dr. Dre's] *The Chronic*, which absolutely changed the whole hip-hop landscape, because that was the first time an album of that nature had done such incredibly big business.

"Bill Cosby really jump-started hip-hop culture. That one episode was the first time America got to see a sampler."

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And here we come arriving on the platform about three minutes late, and the train just left us sitting there until, like, 1999, when a new train came.

So once gangsta rap went pop, you felt the alternative/bohemian hip-hop guys like Arrested Development and the Roots were an endangered species.

Really, the alternative movement—I always joke that [current *Vibe* editor-in-chief] Danyel Smith killed it all. She did the most scathing story I've ever seen. I have nightmares about this, and it's not even my group. She did what started out as merely a profile of Arrested Development for *Vibe* and it turned into an investigative dissection. This was when their second album, *Zingalamaduni*, came out, after they'd won the Grammy for Best New Artist. That one article actually broke the group up. She just exposed it all.

Exposed what?

Any cynical questions you ever had about left-leaning or alternative music. She did this interview with [group leader] Speech first, and something inside her wasn't believing nothing he was saying, so she decided to interview the other seven members of the group, and she just got it out of them. It was locked up like Fort Knox in the beginning, but before long, people were crying: "We haven't even got a per diem. We don't have health insurance. He talks about revolution, but he gets all the money." I read it, and I was like, "Yo, we don't have a future." This whole idea of us, the left-of-center band, being hypocrites, it's out there.

A lot of people are ready to believe that anyway.

Well, the pendulum swings back and forth. That's why Obama is the new De La Soul.

What do you mean? That Obama's getting elected is gonna be like 3 Feet High and Rising and bring all the liberal white and black people together? And then we'll get bored and turn on him?

Nah, man, I said enough. All I'll say is that everybody's already waiting there in the wings, ready to nail him.

"Our entire budget for *Do You Want More*?!!!!!! was \$2 million. Unheard of."

It's taken awhile for hip-hoppers to come around to Obama. The initial reaction was to be suspicious or cynical or feel like it doesn't matter who's president.

But there's a hopeless romantic in everybody, and what Barack says is beautiful, and it's executed in such a way that you just believe. And people need something to believe in—*bad*. Faith is the evidence of things not seen and sorta hoped for. And



From left: The award-winning Roots crew represent at the 2000 Grammy ceremony; Jazmine and the Reverend Al Green in a more pleasantly contemplative moment



because we've been let down so much, I guess it's better to protect yourself. But I don't think people can survive without something to believe in. We're all not atheists.

The hip-hop stance generally seems atheistic.

I think we're more nihilistic. I think to be an atheist is to be indifferent, to the point where you just don't care. If you're nihilistic, there's still some passionate anger in love. I still consider anger an offspring cousin of love. The opposite of love is indifference, and that's where you really just don't give a fuck, you truly don't. And even though rappers say, "I don't give a fuck!" that's used more as an expression of passionate anger to show that they really do care.

Going back to the success of *The Chronic*, did the record company's opinion of you really change that quickly?

Honestly, the thing that probably affected us most directly was Kurt Cobain's passing. When we had negotiations with Geffen in early '93, they were still just riding the crest of the wave of '91, between the business that [Nirvana's] *Nevermind*

[Laughs] Aerosmith was going back to Columbia, and Cobain was gone. Then they actually dropped four acts a week later. So we were like, "Sheee-iiiit. This is really bad."

But didn't you sign for a ton of money?

What the fuck was that group, Helmet? There was such a hoopla over Helmet, they signed this astronomical deal.

They supposedly signed to Interscope for a million-dollars-plus after Nirvana blew up.

I never heard their music, but I knew they signed for a crazy high amount. And I knew rap labels weren't even trying to give you a budget so you could compete on a bigger scale—the average deal was under \$100,000. The label we were gonna roll with was Mercury, and everything was all gray. [The label offered \$150,000.] Then, at the eleventh hour, Geffen wanted to sign us, and we thought it was a joke. But as a bluff, we were like, "We want this, that, this, that, this, and five of these, and three of these." We had a Christmas list bigger than Helmet could ever think of. And what was even crazier, they took it!

What did you end up getting?

I think, ultimately, our entire budget for *Do You Want More*?!!!!!!!, recording, promotion, touring, was, like, \$2 million.

What?

Yeah, I know, it was unheard of. And believe it or not, we basically controlled our own budget. But from Cobain's suicide on, within a two-week period, that was the light-a-fire-under-your-ass period. We completed the entire album, did the artwork, mastered it, turned it in, shot the videos. Then three days later, bye-bye, we took our money and ran away and got a four-bedroom flat in London. We got another agent and told him to book us everywhere in town he could.

**"I NEVER SAW MY DAD MUCH.
HE WAS ALWAYS GRILLING.
SORRY THAT GOT SO PERSONAL."**

-Lloyd



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The acid jazz scene was still going on, which you fit into.

Yeah, mixing hip-hop and jazz and soul with live instruments, that idea. The Amy Winehouse sound isn't all that surprising. That's how cats were playing in London for the longest time. Anyway, it was like us working out at the gym, until we were looking like Mr. Universe when we came back to the States.

But when you got back, things went badly?

The argument [between Black Thought, manager Rich Nichols, Twestlove, and label execs] that opens and ends *Rising Down* is based on that eight-month waiting period, after we turned in the record, when our initial June 28, 1994, release date got pushed back to January '95. That was just the frustration of waiting in limbo, or not having a future. All the promises and all the excitement of '93 became a thing of the past, because the label had to scale down because their golden boys weren't generating the money, so we saw the ugly side. We were supposedly hiring street teams to do promotion, but we'd go to record stores and radio stations that didn't know we were coming. We'd drive five hours to clubs, and they didn't know why we there.

Still, *Do You Want More?*!!!!!! was critically acclaimed, as was the next album, *Illadelph Halflife*. And the sales weren't terrible.

By 1996, '97, some hip-hop gatekeepers were like, "Okay, we'll let you play some of our reindeer games." And at that point, an underground hip-hop scene had formed, inspired by the *Stretch Armstrong & Bobbito* [radio] show at Columbia University. That's sort of when Rich Nichols said the only way that our music was really going

"One thing I'm head-scratching the most is these white bloggers who embrace minstrel culture and hate being white."

to make sense was if it was contextualized and compared to something else—we basically got to do some Moses/Noah-type shit. So we made this list of everybody in hip-hop we needed to associate ourselves with. We went to our A&R and said, "Look, in order for us to work, we have to have a movement. This is more than just a single and the right song." So we spent all of 1997 and all of 1998 building. That meant us going to Common, saying, "Yo, don't you wanna be on a real major, where they spend money on you?" And he's like, "Oh yeah." So our first priority was getting Common off [indie label] Relativity, bringing him over by any means—that was number one. Then [Geffen] signed Black Star, plus Mos Def and Talib Kweli separately. And D'Angelo and I had cemented our relationship, so it was starting to look like a movement. Then, the second wave of the alternative hip-hop thing arrived in 1999. A lot of it was the commercial backlash to Puffy, a lot of it was the promise of something new. Erykah Badu comes through, Jill Scott. Suddenly, we make sense.

Being Jay-Z's backup band for MTV *Unplugged* and various events has helped give you a new level of fame. Has he treated you well?

Of everyone, he's probably the most professional, the most open-minded. He's Jay-motherfuckin'-Z,

and he's still asking me, "What can we do to make this better?" He's the only one who's ever asked questions. Anyone else I've worked with, we've come to near pugilism over every idea. Shit, Al Green cursed me out. [Twestlove coproduced Green's new album, *Lay It Down*.] The reverend said, and I quote: "Why are these motherfuckin' computers everywhere? I'm gonna sing it the way I wanna sing it, goddamn it!"

Wow.

The Reverend Al Green, ladies and gentlemen.

The Roots got a lot of criticism for the song "Birthday Girl," featuring Patrick Stump from Fall Out Boy, which was later dropped from the new album.

The one thing about that I'm head-scratching the most is these white bloggers who embrace minstrel culture and also hate being white. Like, I'm always hearing an apology from a white Roots fan about there being too many white fans at our shows, like from a place of shame. It's like all these other white people don't know the real, but here's the one who does. These same people who doubt us, then they co-sign something else—like they're going nuts for [Lil Wayne's] "Duffle Bag Boy"—and it reeks of a double standard.

So you don't think people are criticizing the song but the perception of you working with this white rock guy who's not cool enough?

I don't know the politics of the hipster music world. Usually when black people fuck with anybody [on a collaboration], the first thing they're thinking about is commerce: How can I turn their audience into my audience? I just thought people would see the campiness and ironic humor in the song. [Suddenly, there's a rustling noise on the line, followed by a long pause] Hang on a second. [Another long pause] Oh God, welcome to my life. Okay, so my manager's telling me that apparently Wal-Mart won't stock our album unless we drop the song "75 Bars."

Why? The lyrics?

They feel that 43 "niggas" is a little too over the top. I gotta fight them on this one. This is bullshit.

I guess that kinda puts the so-called controversy over "Birthday Girl" into perspective. Yeah, don't it? ☹

DISCOGRAPHY ? UESTLOVE



THE ROOTS
Do You Want More?!!!!!! ★★ ★★
UNIVERSAL/MCA, 1995

No samples—drums, keys, bass, horns, beatbox, and two MCs create a hematic yet free-swinging flow that boasts a sunny openness unlike any other hip-hop record (or for that matter, the Philly kids were the obvious result of A Tribe Called Quest.



THE ROOTS
Things Fall Apart ★★ ★★ ★★
MCA, 1999

A subtly focused manifesto that further grounded hip-hop soul power over jazzy grooves and social critique over battle rhymin'. It also swelled the Roots' claim to a movement-style posse, while the nuanced love song "You Got Me" (featuring Erykah Badu) won a Grammy.



THE ROOTS
Phenology ★★ ★★
MCA, 2002

The breakthrough of *Things Fall Apart* emboldened the group to push their songwriting, playing, and production to exhilarating and, at times, bewildering extremes. "Water" is a ten-minute meditation on MC Malik's drug troubles, and "The Seed 12.0" gives singer/songwriter Cody Chesnutt a rock spotlight.



THE ROOTS
Illadelph Halflife ★★ ★★
DGC, 1996

After *Do You Want More?!!!!!!* got lost in deep major-label doo-doo, the group toughened and broadened their sound, with Twestlove interlarded programmed drums, and jazz diva Cassandra Wilson (among others) chipping in. The rap-riche indictment "What They Do" scratched the Top 40.



THE ROOTS
The Roots Come Alive ★★ ★★
MCA, 1999

In hip-hop history (there is literally no competition), Twestlove and Co. document the tumbling hurly-burly of a Roots show with this patch of the recordings from New York and Paris. The dynamic interplay between Black Thought and bandmates is stunning.



THE ROOTS
Game Theory ★★ ★★ ★★
DEF JAM, 2006

percussion and discordant melodic snatches, the Roots' seventh studio album shakes it up with invigorating purpose. Paranoia and despair get a fresh airing but never overwhelm Black Thought's pointed screeds about Katrina, oil-ford food scams, and the drug gauntlet. CA.



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THE BIG SLEEP



DARYL HALL



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"The sun will not interfere with the darkness of the Raveonettes." —**SHARIN FOO** "The first time we came [in 2003] there were chairs and guitars thrown around. It's a bit more relaxed these days." —**BRITISH SEA POWER'S MARTIN NOBLE** "The kids knew the words to songs that we haven't even posted. Someone leaked the record, but that's fine, as long as people come to shows." —**THE VON BONDIES' JASON STOLLSTEIMER** "It's not so much stress as it is excitement. There's some form of energy that springs up in you, and all of a sudden you're capable of doing five days of walking and playing." —**RA RA RIOT'S ALEXANDRA LAWN**



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Glass's Menagerie



He's the maverick classical composer whose influence can be heard in a new generation of decidedly nonclassical artists, from Sufjan Stevens to LCD Soundsystem. And he's now the subject of a ten-CD box set. Here's how **Philip Glass** made repetition so hip it sometimes hurts.



It's a brisk night in February, and Carnegie Hall's stage is crammed with a typical rock-benefit finale, everyone gathered to roast an old chestnut. The song is the Kinks' garage classic "All Day and All of the Night," and rocking out alongside the song's dad, Ray Davies, are Patti Smith, Michael Stipe, Tom Verlaine, Sufjan Stevens, Band of Horses, and a gang of bopping, saffron-robed Tibetan monks. To Davies' immediate left is a scholarly-looking guy, dressed in black with little round wire-rimmed glasses, who shouts along to the chorus.

A week later, Philip Glass—the scholarly-looking guy—walks into a studio at Dunvagen Music, his Lower Manhattan production facility. His young

staff buzzes around him, and his heavy-lidded eyes widen in thanks when an associate brings him coffee. After a sip, he puts down his mug, whips out an iPhone, and with a few expert strokes, calls up a shaky YouTube video of the aforementioned performance.

"He's the grand maestro of rock'n'roll," Glass says of Davies, pointing to the ant-size figure on the screen. "He actually put his arm around me and we sang it together!"

Glass, who turned 71 this year, is hardly your average fanboy. For one, he put together this benefit for Tibet House (the cultural organization he founded with Richard Gere and Columbia professor Robert Thurman, Uma's dad), a concert series he's hosted



for 22 years; past performers include David Bowie, Conor Oberst, Lou Reed, and Dave Matthews. Glass also happens to be the most famous living American composer. He's written more than 20 operas, along with numerous symphonies, concertos, string quartets, and film scores, including *Koyaanisqatsi* and *The Truman Show*. (At last check, his website noted more than 170 separate works.)

But Glass has a relationship to the rock and pop world that's unique among his peers. He's collaborated with all sorts of genre-blurring artists, including Bowie, David Byrne, Brian Eno, Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen, Laurie Anderson, and Aphex Twin. Back in the '70s and '80s, he performed in fabled New York rock venues like Max's Kansas City, Danceteria, Hurrah's, and—just once—CBGB. ("It was a terrible place to play," he recalls. "Bad sound.") In the '80s, he coproduced and played with avant-new-wavers Polyrock.

Yet even this doesn't really get at his importance beyond the orchestra hall. As one of the fathers of so-called minimalist composition in the 1970s, he coined a language of short, pulsing, rhythmic phrases that, in its hypnotic use of extreme repetition and simple melodies, reflected many of rock's pleasures and anticipated those of electronic dance music. That much of his early work used excessive amplification and other electronics just added to the effect.

"When repetitive structured music, which is what I was doing, is played loud," Glass says, "you begin to hear kind of the froth—it's like a river that sends up all this white foam. It was the foam I was interested in."

Glass' foamier music suspends and stretches time in remarkable ways; some of his greatest works (*Music in 12 Parts*, *Einstein on the Beach*) extend past the four- and five-hour mark, making epic jams by Phish or Boredoms seem puny by comparison. And at a time when adventurous musicians are looking beyond new wave and other exhausted retro styles for inspiration, the pleasures of Glass' infinitely circling patterns are turning up in all sorts of places.

You can hear echoes of his sound in the folksy orchestral arrangements of Sufjan Stevens, whose *BQE*—a multimedia meditation on New York's Brooklyn-Queens Expressway staged last year at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (a longtime presenter of Glass' work)—felt at times like a Glass homage. You can hear it in the repeated piano figures of LCD Soundsystem's "All My Friends," a highlight of last year's *Sound of Silver*. You can hear it in the hypno-electro of Dan Deacon, the arty indie pop of Dirty Projectors, and the minimalist grooves of Stereolab. You can hear traces of it in the loop-minded art rock of Battles and Foals and Animal Collective, and in some of the tweaked, string-laced romanticism of Bonnie "Prince" Billie and Antony and the Johnsons.

"His influence, musically, is too far-reaching to comprehend or measure," says Stevens, who first encountered Glass' music while watching a video of the Errol Morris documentary *The Thin Blue Line* with his dad. "There is absolutely no disorder" in the composer's music, Stevens adds, noting his special admiration for the 1981 recording *Glassworks*. "That's what's so refreshing about it—it is unrelentingly beautiful."

"He just put together something so fierce," says Dirty Projectors' Dave Longstrech of Glass' more radical works, such as *Einstein on the Beach*, the 1976 opera conceived with avant-garde theater guru Robert Wilson that established Glass as a major figure. Its electrified mantras so obsessed a college roommate that Longstrech heard them at ear-bleeding volume for hours on end. "I loved it," he says, adding that when he put *Einstein* on the stereo at home one Christmas, "my grandmother made me turn it off because she was worried that she was going to have a seizure."



"CBGB WAS A
TERRIBLE PLACE
TO PLAY.
BAD SOUND."



Born and raised in Baltimore, Glass began his career in the mid-'60s as a fairly conventional young classical composer fresh out of Juilliard. One early transformative experience was in 1965 transcribing the music of Indian sitar virtuoso Ravi Shankar into Western notation, which altered Glass' ideas about rhythm and time. ("In Western music, we divide time the way you slice a loaf of bread," Glass once wrote. "In Indian music...you take small units, or beats, and string them together.") Another, in 1967, was working with like-minded composer Steve Reich, with whom he shared ideas about repetition. And

another, in '69, was seeing Jefferson Airplane at Manhattan's Fillmore East.

"I want to be like that," Glass recalls thinking. "I want to be loud."

Toward those ends, he connected with soundman Kurt Munkacsi, who worked with experimental composer La Monte Young (whose early collaborator, John Cale, would later form the Velvet Underground with Lou Reed), as well as John Lennon. When Munkacsi heard Glass' new music around 1970—by which time Glass was employing electric keyboards, sax, and largely wordless vocals to create a swirling signature sound—he had an idea. "I took what I was learning in rock'n'roll technology about high amplification and really deep bass," Munkacsi says, "and decided to see what would happen if I applied it to Philip's music when he performs live."

What happened was a seismic shift in the possibilities of "classical" music, when Glass presented his work at the downtown loft space where he lived, his band in a circle in the center of the room surrounded by the audience and a huge quadraphonic sound system. Apocryphal tales of listeners having profound psychedelic experiences at performances are legion, though the musicians themselves rarely indulged. "You couldn't really do any serious drugs; the music was too complicated," says Munkacsi. "If you were to drop acid and try to do a Philip Glass performance, you couldn't possibly. The most anybody did was maybe have a glass of wine or smoke a joint before a concert."

MARK NASON



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In any case, the music itself was mind- (and body-) altering. Of a London performance he attended in 1971 with his friend David Bowie, Brian Eno has said: "This was one of the most extraordinary musical experiences of my life—sound made completely physical and as dense as concrete by sheer volume and repetition." (Years later, Glass would return the admiration, writing symphonies based on the Bowie/Eno collaborative albums *Low* and *Heroes*.)

In the early '70s, Glass also started an indie label, Chatham Square, to release his music, an uncommon move at the time. He also started his own publishing company based on a tip from legendary rock songwriter Jerry Leiber, who attended the same Baltimore high school. Glass remembers the day Leiber took him to his office: "There's a roomful of people sitting in front of typewriters and phones. And Leiber said, 'They're finding money under rocks! They track the money and bring it back here. You've got to start a publishing company...that's how you'll make a living.'"

Glass took his advice, and although the composer supported himself via odd jobs and driving a cab up until a while after *Einstein on the Beach*, Leiber was right.

Glass' music has hardly been critic-proof. While some may have happily tripped out to his early material, others were infuriated; according to Munkacsi, an early-'70s performance in a Queens park was interrupted by a man banging on Glass' keyboard and shouting, "How can you call this music?!" On another occasion, the composer had to push a furious audience member off the stage. More recently, Glass has been accused of recycling and overproduction. In a review last year, *New Yorker* critic Alex Ross noted that the composer had produced more than 50 major works in the past decade alone. Pondering Glass' distinctive musical signature, he declared, "The question now is whether that signature is being produced by automatic pen."

Glass has a Buddhist temperament with regard to detractors. "People say I compose a lot of music; I say, 'Well, it's a nervous habit,'" he says, laughing and pushing his eyeglasses up. "But in a way, that isn't that far from the truth. That's just the way my artistic metabolism works. Some people can spend two years on a piece and make it perfect, and I maybe do 20 pieces in two years and get a

"PEOPLE SAY
I COMPOSE A LOT
OF MUSIC. I SAY,
'WELL, IT'S A
NERVOUS HABIT.'"



With Patti Smith
and Michael Stipe
in February 2007

few good measures here and there. It's just a question of how you do things. I like the excitement of finishing work and going on to new work. I rarely rewrite; I rarely go back."

This situation, along with Glass' current indie cred, makes his music ripe for rediscovery. He is the subject of a new documentary by Scott Hicks, director of *Shine*. An excellent ten-CD anthology—including the trance-inducing *Music in 12 Parts* and a large chunk of *Einstein on the Beach*—will be released this summer by Nonesuch. And a new production of *Einstein* is scheduled for 2009 at Manhattan's Lincoln Center. Robert Wilson will again be directing, and Glass and his ensemble will be performing. "It's not likely we'll do it again in our lifetimes," Glass says with a flickering grin.

But the graying gentleman with the iPhone has no time to ponder mortality. He is about to head off to Los Angeles to perform new works (including the sublimely melancholic *Songs and Poems for Solo Cello*) with Wendy Sutter, a young cellist whom he is currently dating, then to Australia and New Zealand for concerts. And at the moment, as night settles over Lower Manhattan, he has to get home to have dinner with his kids. So he bids farewell and heads off.

Glass' renewed cachet with the rock world may invite some interesting new collaborations down the road. But one admirer will probably not be knocking on his door. "A collaboration?" says Sufjan Stevens. "That's like asking Muhammad Ali for boxing lessons." ☘



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Free as a Bird

Bustin' out of Bonnaroo, Jim James and Co. craft an epic summer jam BY SHANNON ZIMMERMAN

My Morning Jacket Evil Urges ★★★★★

The trajectory of My Morning Jacket from humble folkies with jam-band tendencies into a group with Super Bowl halftime potential may seem an unlikely career arc. From the band's first album, 1999's *The Tennessee Fire*, singer/guitarist Jim James has couched his ghostly, reverb-soaked falsetto in American Gothicism. The tunes were pretty and a tad creepy, but somewhat shapeless. At best, they pointed toward two intriguing Southern-rock variants: the hard-drinking, art-damaged '90s drawl of Will Oldham and his Palace brethren and the hard-drinking, Dylan-

damaged '60s twang of the Band.

On *Evil Urges*, MMJ's fifth studio album, they completely slip out of that bind, serving up outsize hooks that deliver on the promise of 2005's *Z*, the polished teaser that signaled their intent to reach a wider audience.

The sophistication of the group's music has grown, now showcasing the burn-it-down passion of James' songcraft, which was obscured in the past by long-winded guitar heroism. Winy, foot-stomping riff-rockers ("Remnants," "Aluminum Park") compress an album's worth of catchy bits and raw power into eight-plus minutes. "I'm Amazed" and "Smokin' From Shootin'," a pair of black-light Blikkers, get compact mixes that keep both tunes' gospel-inflected melodies aloft while James and guitarist Carl Broemel run tautly intertwined scales, conjuring the

sublime duels of Television's Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd.

But the question is, Will the Bonnarooians who pushed the band to the cusp of mass acceptance still love them tomorrow? On merits, the answer should be an emphatic yes. *Evil Urges* is easily

James and Broemel conjure the sublime guitar duels of Television.

MMJ's most accomplished and ambitious record, masterfully sifting through genres. The title track's abrupt shift from Smoke Robinson soul to Houses of the Holy stomp is thrilling; the '70s schlock-pop riff that powers "Thank You Too"—a string-laden ballad—is a deft, bell-bottomed flashback. The throbbing, bass-driven "Touch Me I'm

Going to Scream Part 2" laces disco-period Kiss through Golden Earring's golden age, and the goofy robo-metal of "Highly Suspicious" will sound terrific thumping out of a nearby car when you're stuck in traffic en route to the beach.

But the tenderhearted moodiness that seduced early converts is here, too: Despite a "peace and glory" refrain, "Look at You" is the disc's most morbid moment, a slow burner James sings with soul-stained regret. And set to a funeral cadence plucked out on a ramshackle acoustic guitar, "Librarian" offers these choice words of bitter wisdom: "Since we got the interview, these hardly get used." "These" are books, but the same sentiment could apply to albums: In the digital age, who listens from beginning to end? Hook-happy and deeply felt, *Evil Urges* makes a compelling case that we should.

Ellen Allien

Soot ★★★½

BITECH CONTROL

Mixing found sounds, slinky beats, and a touch of romance, Blippy but blufuened, this Berlin DJ/producer's latest opens amid voices of field-recorded commuters and staccato keyboard ("Einstenigen") before segueing into the ingenious "Cares," which, among myriad stomping beats, features 3-D Ping-Pong-ball percussion. "It's shares DNA with the creepy, cerebral fun of early Talking Heads, but about the time inevitable

minimal techno ennui begins to set in, Allien uncorks "Frieda," an unabashedly soulful song about her grandmother that sails past arresting into breathtaking.

Seductive and smartly sequenced, Soot serves up electronica with a human face and a beating heart.

SHANNON ZIMMERMAN

Animal Collective

Water Curses ★★★½

DOMINO

Electronic pop naturalists create a sonic life aquatic

Amid the globules of sound on "Cobwebs," Animal Collective's

Avey Tare mumbles about being "organic like strawberry meat." But on this new four-song EP, that's as close as the Brooklyn group gets to the compacted Day-Glo noise pop of last year's *Strawberry Jorm*. The title track is a garrulously bubbling treat, but the piano-led whale song "Seal Eyeing" reveals the group as comfy at the deep end of their sound pool. Even when singing about domestic concerns on the dubbed-out "Street Flash," they sound ungrounded, drifting away in blissful inertia. **ANDY BETA**



Blue Scholars: In favor of closing the "gun-show loophole"? Likely.

The BellRays

Hard Sweet and Sticky ★★★

MAGNIFY

Veteran noisemakers discover a new way to blow off steam. After more than 15 years in action, Southern California's BellRays have mastered the essentials of swaggering rock'n'roll. As guitarist Bob Vennum spews slashing power chords and sleazy solos, hard-boiled shouter Lisa Kekaula snarls, "I'm comin' down to getcha!" like she's going homicidal, and injects the protest anthem "That's the Way" with thrilling, righteous anger. But Kekaula delivers a bigger jolt when she unleashes her inner torch singer on the melancholy ballad "Wedding Bells," which makes the noisier songs seem too predictable by half. **JON YOUNG**

Coast jeep beats, and progressive politics, Blue Scholars are one of underground hip-hop's most challenging voices. Their third EP includes "Loyalty," a stand-out track from last year's inspiring *Boyz'n' album*, two new songs (including the anthemic antiwar, pro-democracy title track), plus three instrumentals. "Others grip the gun / My weapon is my tongue," raps Geologic on "27," criticizing the military for dangling college scholarships in front of poor youth and enticing them to "exchange their bodies for knowledge." Like the Coup and dead prez, Blue Scholars believe in the revolutionary power of words. **MOSI REEVES**

Bun B

II Trill ★★★½

RAP-A-LOTUS/RELM

After partner's passing, H-town's baddest dude bounces back. Legendary Houston fixture Bun B has a flair for Southern-fried folksiness and lyrics that are as poignantly evocative as they are salaciously entertaining. On this sequel to 2005's *Trill*, the erstwhile UGK member captures his region's playful charm ("Pop It 4 Pimp") while revealing his thoughtful side, via politically charged gems ("Get Cha Issue") and a benediction for partner Pimp C, who died last winter. The strip-club anthems are reliably present. But Bun combines swagger with substance without losing a step. Now, that's edutainment. **WILL DUKE**

T Bone Burnett

Tooth of Crime ★★

NONE/SUCH

Oh, brother, where art thou dark wit, listenable songs? Few musicians conjure apocalyptic dread better than Burnett, and few plays forecast a world of toxic environmentalism more presciently than Sam Shepard's 1972 *Tooth of Crime*. So a Burnett album based on Shepard's old project makes sense. But between the singer/songwriter's hectoring-preacher delivery



Miss Rap Supreme can eat her Skittles.

Kid Dynamite

Hip-hop's dazzling girl wonder tries to grow up fast

Lil Mama

Voice of the Young People ★★★

JIVE/ZOMBA

Originally planned for release last September, this 18-year-old Brooklyn fireball's debut album follows a yearlong string of singles and semi-singles. Teasing crushed-out boys in front of her locker in "Lip Gloss" and rolling with Avril Lavigne while referencing *Pop in Pop* in her "Girlfriend" remix, Niaxia Kirkland generated more bleacher-beat rock'n'roll energy than any other human

in 2007. Her kiddie-assisted round-the-mulberry-bush line dance "G-Slide (Four Bus)" and kinetic Chris Brown- and "Pimpin'" assisted TV dance-show theme "Shawty Get Loose" should also be on your hard drive. But while a few of the ringtone-ready R&B

She's got bleacher-beat rock energy.

concoctions that stretch out the album (especially "Swim" and "One HR Wonder") retain her lip-smacking effectiveness, too frequently she winds up subdued. Lil Mama is most in her element making

sugared-up Radio Disney tykes dance. So it's disconcerting, if understandable, that she's so insistent on showing off a maturing mind-set and athletic ability to rhyme real fast.

Eight tracks in, gears shifting into a downbeat cast of ghetto-reality tracks documenting unplanned pregnancies, the plight of foster daughters, and the difficulty of going away to college when one's dad is behind bars. They're thoughtful enough to help make this one of the year's best rap albums. But compared to the bubblegum classics she's trying to outgrow, they sort of feel like homework. **CHUCK EDDY**

The Black Angels

Directions to See a Ghost ★★★½

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Trying to make the 432nd acid trip just as trippy as the first. Named after the most abrasive track on the first Velvet Underground album, this druggy setlist from Austin, Texas, reaches for spine-prickling, horror-inducing sonic delverance. Like their 2006 debut, *Passover*, *Ghost* drowns in Spacemans 3-like drone, feedback, and reverb until the tunes congeal into a deliberately muddy, impenetrable trance. Whether going tribal ("Vikings") or settling on two chords ("Never/Ever"), the fuzzed-out guitars and pulsing organs create a retro-psychedic sound that morphs slowly, like a lava lamp remodeling forms, while the vocals eerily call in from a distant room. **ROB O'CONNOR**

Blue Scholars

Butter&Gun ★★★½

MASSIVE/RAKIMUS

Seattle duo's Uzi weighs a ton, in the brainpower department. As proponents of a style that blends dense lyricism, West

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and predictable surf-guitar-noir arrangements, the result is one dreary sermon. Even moments of potential transcendence—like the lofty "Kill Zone," cowering with the late Roy Orbison—feel leaden. When Burnett opens his mouth, he brings everything down, and not just mankind. **DAVID BROWNE**

Kira Lynn Cain

The Ideal Hunter ★★★

EVANGELINE

Bay Area torch singer fades into wisps of blue smoke

On her debut album, Kira Lynn Cain's vocals are more felt than heard among slumbering rhythms, decadent strings, piano, organ, and delicate acoustic guitar. The dreamscapes alternate between early-'70s French pop (see Françoise Hardy's *La Question*) and incidental music for a film to be named later. Lap steel sets a Western mood ("The Strange Light"), while repetitive guitar patterns and obscuring reverberation ("The Lone") marry Mazzy Star to the ice-capped solemnity of Sigur Rós. Haunting, but maybe next time Cain should include a dose of NoDz. **ROB O'CONNOR**

Curumin

JapanPopShow ★★★

QUINQUIN

Cheerful Brazilian oddball brews up a world of groovy fun
Luciano Nakata Albuquerque (a.k.a. Curumin) is the offspring

of Japanese and Spanish parents, so it's not surprising that he boasts a wide range of influences. What is surprising, though, is how effortless his second album feels. The woozy, reggaeified title track has the brain-melting charm of a pot-addled jam. Elsewhere, dense funk collides happily with old-fashioned samba and bossa nova; "Kyoto" suggests Caetano Veloso fronting Funkadelic. If "Fumanchu," a throwaway based on a simple electric piano riff, can provide such immense pleasure, there's some sneaky magic in effect. **JOHN YOUNG**

Cut Copy

In Ghost Clothes ★★★½

MODULAR

Electro trembles ascend to a new level of synth-pop bliss

With their second album, Australian trio Cut Copy prove that 2005's unexpected dance-rock gem *Bright Like Neon* Love was no fluke. In *Ghost Clothes*, coproduced by DFA's Tim Goldsworthy, teens with gracefully fluid jams like "Hearts on Fire" and "Nobody Lost, Nobody Found," and seamlessly moves from creamy French house homages to spacey psychedelic rock. Leader Dan Whitford isn't the sharpest trickster and nearly undercuts the melodic delights with clunky choruses such as "Listen to the voice that says all right." But with songs this hooky, it's impossible not to



The Duke Spirit: She's the leader of the pack.

enjoy Cut Copy's lush new-wave revival. **MOSI REEVES**

Kevin Devine

Put Your Ghost to Rest ★★★½

PROCASTINATE! MUSIC TRAITORS

Major-label casualty rises again with heartrending stories

This emo-folk full-length by the Brooklyn-based songwriter came out on Capitol in late 2006, but corporate restructuring at EMI sentenced it to an

early grave, so Devine has hooked up with his buddies in Brand New to rerelease the album on their new indie label. Full of richly detailed accounts of both Saturday-night barhopping and crisis-of-conscience soul-searching—not to mention melodies far more memorable than many of Devine's peers'—*Put Your Ghost to Rest* deserves this second shot. It's like a Bright Eyes record for Dashboard Confessional fans. **MIKAEL WOOD**

The Dresden Dolls

No, Virginia ★★★½

ACADEMY AWARD

Life's still a cabaret for Boston's campy misfit toys

The Dresden Dolls' drama-club chic is undeniably cute (see YouTube for details), but as 2006's *No, Virginia* attests, the duo are hardly Rocky Horror rebrands: Brainiac witty and musically astute, frontwoman Amanda Palmer skates lightly across antecedents as far-flung as Bertolt Brecht, Queen, and *The Exorcist* soundtrack. No, *Virginia* compiles a clutch of new tunes, old demos, B-sides, and cast-offs from the previous album, but it scores biggest with an obsessed fan's accordion-powered rendition of the Psychedelic Furs' "Pretty in Pink." Of the newer cache, "The Sheep Song" stands out, a tight flick for piano and percussion that Palmer sings like a banshee. Talk about Method acting. **SHANNON ZIMMERMAN**

The Duke Spirit

Neptune ★★★½

SHANGRI-LA

Female-fronted rockers trade bluesy scuzz for soulful furs

These Brits move with purpose from girl-group-inspired pop ("My Sunkin Treasure") to fully loaded Jesus and Mary Chain-fried fuzz ("Lasso") in remarkably short steps. The connection between such potentially disparate sounds is singer Liela Moss, who brings sultry



The drugs don't work—well, most of the time.

Still Floating in Space

Psych-guitar guru poignantly addresses the void

Spiritualized

Songs in A&E ★★★★★

FONTANA/SPEAKMAN

Viewed in panorama, Jason Pierce's career looks like the drug rush that has fueled and inspired it, beginning with the dense, droning energy of Spacemen 3 and early Spiritualized and moving toward more contemplative comedowns. Naturally, the early highs offered more immediate payoff—later albums sagged—but number six, *Songs in A&E*, finds an eerie strength in quietude and mortality. "Death Take Your Fiddle" begins with haunting breaths—perhaps

inspired by Pierce's near demise from pneumonia in 2005—and plays out with Nick Cave-level gloom fueled by resignation, rather than anger. "Don't Hold Me Too Close" finds peaks in emotional valleys, ending with an exhausted yet striking

***Songs in A&E* finds an eerie strength in quietude and mortality.**

processional. When flitting with greater volume, Pierce sounds less assured: "I Gotta Fire" grasps at psych-blues energy (echoing "Gimme Shelter"), as does buzzy rocker "Yeah Yeah." But when he splits the difference, the lush, surprisingly Oasis-like

"Soul on Fire" emerges.

Eventually, everything comes blissfully, perversely together. On the album-closing lullaby "Goodnight Goodnight," Pierce's weathered voice, accompanied by acoustic guitar and humming strings, teases sweet relief ("You'll be all right," he gently sings) after having battered us with songs of doubt ("Baby I'm Just a Fool") and death ("Borrowed Your Gun"). But then, in the final seconds, he delicately intones the words "funeral home" four times. While that may sound oddly pretentious on paper, it somehow makes chillingly perfect sense for a guy fascinated by the beautiful noise of self-destruction. **JOSH MOELLER**



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Missing Meg

Jack White gets his rocks off—again. And?

The Raconteurs
Consolers of the
Lonely ★★
THIRD MAN/WARTNER BROS.

Is Jack White better off working with only one other person? The second album from his frisky-boys side project causes you to wonder. As on 2006's *Broken Boy Soldiers*, White and friends make like kids bashing out AC/DC knockoffs in a suburban garage. His sheer delight at playing off them was not just Meg is evident in the bench-pressed riffs of "Five on the Five" and "Salute Your

Solution"; the slide-driven "Top Yourself" beeps up the Stripes' often malnourished, Led Zep-derived arena blues. But too often, the Raconteurs' love of twisty, monolithic rock gives way to bombast that teeters between homage and

Their rock bombast teeters between homage and parody.

parody. You don't so much listen to *Consolers of the Lonely* as ask questions while it's playing. Is "The Switch and the Spur" the closest anyone's come this decade to mimicking Spinal Tap's "Stonehenge"? Are

the hints of hair-metal power balladry in co-singer/guitarist Brendan Benson's songs actually sincere? Did White intend for "Carolina Drama" to be little more than a conpendium of every Southern-gothic family-tragedy cliché?

Now and then, the matchup of White's emotional and Benson's musical volatility and Benson's power-pop Jones pays off: "You Don't Understand Me" plays like a long-lost, bitter Badfinger outtake. But it's also easy to imagine Meg White listening to *Consolers of the Lonely* and thinking it's too damn complicated for its own good. **DAVID BROWNE**

Ecstatic Sunshine

Way ★★★
CARBORAD

Experimental riff wranglers add digital color to the drone

This Baltimore duo began as a guitar-only ambient project, but for their third LP, they've folded even more daddies into the drone by way of "electronics" player Kieran Gillen, and the band's spastic curlicues (obviously inspired by experimental New York guitar maestro Glenn Branca) are all the more dizzying. Way's three tracks warp, double over, and circle back to

where they started, propelled forward by a layer of effects. Some newcomers might find Ecstatic Sunshine's loops tedious, but brain-melting repetition is the point. **AMANDA PETRUSICH**

Elbow

The Seldom
Seen Kid ★★★★★
PICTON/GEFFEN

Intelligent Brits control too-tasteful urges on fourth LP
Nicer than Pulp, less sappy than Coldplay, Elbow excel at meticulous orchestral pop that doesn't take itself too seriously. For all his husky sincerity and literate lyrics, singer Guy Garvey often comes off as playful, not proper, whether chasing romance ("Mirrorball"), hitting the pub ("Grounds for Divorce"), or joining quest crooner Richard Hawley on "The Fix," a jaunty caper tale with a spy-movie aura. Anyone who's anxious for heavier fare can skip to the closing track ("Friend of Ours"), an ode to a deceased pal that will break the hardest heart. **ION YOUNG**

Fern Knight

Fern Knight ★★
VHF

From the boonies to purgatory, she's traditionally bewitching
Philadelphia hosts a booming community of psychedelic folksingers, and much like locals Espers (whose Greg Weeks produces here), Margaret Wienk is as influenced by the spacey thrills of the incredible String Band as by the down-home mumbles of the Folkways catalog. Predicated on a certain precociousness, her group's third full-length features loads of spectral harp, violin, acoustic guitar, and high, sinister vocals (the record closes with an apocalyptically minded three-song cycle, "The Maggie Suite," which borrows lyrics from Milton's *Paradise Lost*). Regardless, Fern Knight is a delightfully creepy homage to Celtic-Appalachian tradition, and a compelling subversion of traditional folk structure. **AMANDA PETRUSICH**

Fleet Foxes

Fleet Foxes ★★★★★
SUB POP

Seattle kids conjure up a gorgeous backwoods tableau
After releasing *Sun Giant*, a five-track EP, earlier this year, Fleet Foxes have corralled their

sprawling, harmony-laden rock into a remarkable debut album. *Fleet Foxes* feels surprisingly rural, considering the band's urban roots; the album opens with a few measures of lawless a cappella singing that wouldn't be entirely out of place on an ancient sacred-harp record, and their affinity for reverb and epic, front-porch howling will remind plenty of Kentucky's *My Morning Jacket* ("Blue Ridge Mountains") also name-checks Tennessee). At its best, *Fleet Foxes* is warm and cathartic, with all the hopefulness of a balmy summer night. **AMANDA PETRUSICH**

Robert Forster

The Evangelist ★★★★★
VIP ROC

Art trumps tragedy as eloquent Aussie survivor carries on
Two years after the death of Gram McCannan, his collaborator in beloved indie rockers the Go-Betweens, Forster gets back to work as a solo artist. With his unassuming voice—like a more agreeable Lou Reed—and spare folk-rock tunes, he's got a gift for importing cosmic subjects like mortality ("Demon Days") and transcendence ("If It Rains") into vivid everyday vignettes, minus any cheesy melodrama. And when Forster seems to address his friend's passing directly ("It Ain't Easy"), a bright rockabilly beat signals resilience to lessen the sting. **ION YOUNG**



Fern Knight: Often finds herself tapping her heels together three times

power to every surface the band scratches. She slips slightly when things inadvertently get too direct, as on the otherwise Heart-like "Send a Little Love Token." But for most of *Neptune*, the Duke Spirit graft sweet coatings onto a dark, swirling center. **JOSH MODEL**

Jackob Dylan

Seeing Things ★★
COLUMBIA/STARBUCKS ENTERTAINMENT
Son of Bob admits Dad actually knew what he was doing

After spending a decade and a half with the Wallflowers trying

to prove that he could do more than mimic his legendary father, Jakob Dylan goes totally Bob on his Rick Rubin-produced solo debut, which finds the 38-year-old holding forth on love and war and evil's rude health in stripped-down acoustic ditties that sound like prosaic outtakes from *The Times They Are A-Changin'*. Melodically, Jakob could've dug a little deeper here, even if he was consciously avoiding radio-ready "One Headlight" territory. But *Seeing Things* does manage a few unexpected moments of time-less grace. **MIKAEL WOOD**



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French Kicks Swimming ★★★

VAGRANT

The classiest garage band this side of the Williamsburg Bridge

At first listen, this Brooklyn-based group's fourth record sounds cut from the same sessions as 2006's lustriously arty *Two Thousand*; but where its predecessor relied on riling crescendos, *Swimming* relaxes. "Abandon" grooves on swaying bass, chirping guitars, and slinger/multi-instrumentalist Nick Stump's nifty drawl; "Sex Tourists" softly implodes on sliding riffs and gliding keys; Tropicalia-touched "Said So What" shakes on a bright, Beach Boys-like chorus. By recycling and loosening up *Two Thousand*'s best elements—inventive instrumental passages, rich harmonies, across-the-board emoting—French Kicks get both poppier and deeper.

WILLIAM GOODMAN

Sean Garrett Turbo 919 ★★★

BET PINKED IF MUSICINTERSCOPE
Technically slick, emotionally dim R&B architect goes solo

This Atlanta-based songwriter/producer has helped craft megahits for Usher, Beyoncé, Clara, and Chris Brown, and on his debut album, he demonstrates that his behind-the-boards work has prepared him reasonably well for a turn in the spotlight. Unfortunately, few of Garrett's ideas about romance have evolved past the

knuckle-dragging stage, which weighs down *Turbo 919*'s sleek, precision-gear beats with loads of brain-dead machismo; on "Come on In" he offers one lady a lesson in lovemaking, later clearly "your man don't fuck you right." How generous. **MIKAEL WOOD**

Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly Searching for the Hows and Whys ★★★½

ATLANTIC

More worldly production can't save windy emo monotony. Sounding simultaneously overwrought and half-baked, the second album from Essex, England's Sam Duckworth is a depressingly patchy affair, almost entirely lacking in the underdog charms that made his 2006 debut so appealing. Multituit electronics producer Nitin Sawhney tempers Duckworth's acoustic guitar and overearnest lyrics with glorious string and brass arrangements. But aside from a stringily somber, memorable duet with Kate Nash, this is the uneasy sound of a once-promising artist lingering in the dark, unsure of his next move. **NADINE O'REGAN**

Al Green Lay It Down ★★★

BLUE NOTE

What's next? Gerard Way producing a Misfits reunion? This R&B equivalent of Loretta Lynn's *Van Lear Rose* pairs Al

Green, the dapper philosopher king of Memphis soul, with producers James Poyser and Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson of the Roots. The result doesn't prove that Green's still got it; *I Can't Stop*, his 2003 reunion with Hi Records impresario Willie Mitchell, already did that. But *Lay It Down* (with tasty guest spots from John Legend, Anthony Hamilton, and Corinne Bailey Rae) makes it clear that Green's devotion to the primacy of his music's groove has only deepened with age. **MIKAEL WOOD**

Joan as Police Woman

To Survive ★★★½

REVEL

Beauty remains the new punk for multi-instrumentalists. Entrancing chamber-pop songstress Joan Wasser easily could get by on just voice and piano, but for her second album, she flexes more ambition, and the results are rewarding. Stepping aside from the ivories, Wasser wanders into a patch of violin tangles and glitchy twitters ("Holiday"), gets soulful support from horns ("Maggies"), and builds a song out of a Robert Frippish guitar lick, sustained synth chords, stark percussion, and a backup choir consisting only of herself ("Start of My Heart"). On the more familiar side, buddy Rufus Wainwright guests on "To America," a subdued cabaret tune about an inattentive lover. **LINSEY THOMAS**

Essentials

Europop BY CHUCK EDDY



t.A.T.u.: Sadly, their fake lesbian affair fizzled.

Abba

Gold: Greatest Hits
ROCKBOX, 1993

A frostbitten singer older than Sweden's ski slopes meets melodies swiped from flamenco, Nashville, and glam rock, and 19 snow-white slices of pop genius emerge. Below the surface, haunted haunts shiver in empty nests while future teens escape to the Friday-night dance floor.

Boney M.

Nightflight to Venus
SME, 1978

West Indian models in glittercock space suits, recruited in Germany by future Milli Vanilli Svengali Frank Farian, transform Neil Young, Creation, and Melodians classics into hotel-Jungle reggae disco. And, in an unfathomable electro-babalatka eulogy to "Rasputin, Russia's greatest love machine," flip Soviet history on its head.

Nena

99 Luftballons
EPIC, 1984

Six years before German reunification, this new-wave tomboy predicts the Cold War will turn hot and imagines standing in the aftermath's dust. Between bilingual versions of the title track, she trills about elephants, dreams, pirates, and question marks, over bubblegum pop as rooted in Motown as it is in krautrock.

Falco

Falco 3
A&M, 1985

Not to be confused with Taco or Trio or Yello, this Austrian macho man hijacks the U.S. pop chart with a metal-riffed opera-trap that claims Mozart and perhaps Immanuel Kant as pop zippers. Once Amadeus has rocked, our glitzy hero tangos through Munich,

Vienna, Arabia, and America. His finale: a Dylan cover.

Various Artists

Electric Salsa
BAJA, 1989

Eurotrash goofballs from Italy, France, Belgium, and Germany flood record dance floors with faux-Caribbean cheese—mispronouncing Don Quixote, invading Cuba, dancing no-future boleros, and making Teutonic techno swing.

Ace of Base

Happy Nation
METRONOME, 1989

Their Swedish lineup mirrors Abba's: two girls, two boys. But the rhythms come from reggae, bhangra, and house. The noisy "Münchenhausen (Just Chaos)"—left off the album's U.S. version—earns its psychomantic title. The saddest song, declared in Gregorian goth, is "Happy Nation" itself.

Aqua

Aquarium
MCA, 1997

Composed by guys with a background in Danish kids films, this delightfully happy cartoon pop bounces like a beach volleyball. On the centerpiece track, Ken seduces Barbie with sleazy come-ons recited in an Igor accent; in the video, Barbie's arm comes off. Mattei was not laughing.

t.A.T.u.

200 Km/H in the Wrong Lane
INTERSCOPE, 2002

Talk about Russian love machines: An alleged teenage lesbian couple, masterminded back on the bloc by a child psychologist and souped-up by producer Trevor Horn (Buggles, Yes, Art of Noise), squeakily speak secret alphabets and interpret the Semiotics.



French Kicks: Extremely psyched about their Brooklyn kickball tournament victory over Les Savv Fav

R.E.M. HELLO

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
**DAVID
BELISLE** INTRODUCTION BY
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Hip Priestess

Because we need a new-wave goth B-girl

Santogold
Santogold ★★★★★
DOWNTOWN/LEAD ZINK

As a former major-label A&R scout, the background talent behind alt-soul singer Res, and frontwoman for Philly pop punks Stiffed, Santi White—now reborn as Brooklyn's Santogold—comes on like the experienced "newcomer" that she is. "I want to get up out of my skin," she declares on opener "L.E.S. Artistes" over clicking Cars guitars, and admits, "I pay for what's called eccentricity and my will to evolve" over the ghostly post-punk dub of "Shove It." You'd have to go back to Grace Jones in the early '80s to find an African-American woman who comes on this strong with avant-garde club funk and weird rock shit.

Like Jones, White bypasses R&B's body-centric testimonies

of emotion. Instead, she sings from the head, as if summoning up an inferior alternative to an outside world that marginalizes, fetishizes, and otherwise criminalizes its native allies. Appearing her inner freak while summoning the hooks to go pop, this well-connected genre-bender transmits the results in multiple soundclash mutations produced by such as-the-moment beatmakers as M.I.A.'s

She takes listeners on a trip to a hidden black America.

Switch and Diplo. Combining new wave, ska, dub, grime, Baltimore club, and hip-hop in an ear-warping wash of 21st-century psychedelia, Santogold takes listeners on a trip to a hidden black America, where White acts as tour guide through the alleyways of her mind and undoubtedly excellent iPod. **BARRY WALTERS**

Scarlett Johansson
Anywhere I Lay
My Head ★★½

ATCO

Bombshell actress coos coyly behind hipster sound sculptor Beyond the fact that her voice is deep enough for her to front Crash Test Dummies, there's nothing particularly compelling about Scarlett Johansson's singing: As one scene in *Lost in Translation* confirmed, she's about as capable as a karaoke enthusiast needs to be. Fortunately, on this collection of Tom Waits covers (plus one original), her vocals are buried deep beneath TV on the Radio guitarist/producer Dave Sitek's mountain of reverbed space-gospel noise. Opener "Fawn" is, in fact, an instrumental. Not your typical Hollywood vanity project. **MIKAEL WOOD**

Kassin+2
Kassin ★★★★★

LUAKA BOP

Versatile trio from Rio completes genre-hopping tropical trilogy Previous albums from the band called the +2's spotlighted singer/guitarist Moreno Veloso (2001's *Music Typewriter*) and electronic experimentalist Domenico Lancelotti (2004's *Sincerely Hor!*). This time, bassist Alexandre Kassín takes control. While the intoxicating *Futurismo* features the gorgeous melodies and titling rhythms that traditionalists expect from

Brazilian music, Kassín alters the script. "Ponto Final" combines a seriously funky beat with jabbering nonsense voices, and "Homem Ao Mar" deploys twangy, thrashing guitars to create cosmopolitan garage rock. High Llamas honcho Sean O'Hagan guests on two tracks, underscoring the multicultural community vibe. **JON YOUNG**

Ladytron
Velocifero ★★½

NETTWERK

Moody robo-pop stylists fire up the pretty hate machine

The two boys and two girls in this synth-rock quartet titled their 2002 disc *Light & Magic*, yet Ladytron's latest has more to do with darkness and doom: "There's a ghost in me," Helen Marnie moans over glam-goth guitars on "Ghosts." *Velocifero*'s grinding soundscapes (honed in part by Alessandro Cortini of Nine Inch Nails) are easy to admire: "I'm Not Scared" throbs like the Stooges' awesomely deranged cover of Madonna's "Ray of Light." Too bad there's rarely much of anything going on below the surface. **MIKAEL WOOD**

Lykke Li
Little Bit EP ★★½

LL

Maybe not the next "Young Folks," but closer than most Lykke Li's timbre and vocal phrasing may bear a striking

resemblance to fellow Swedish pop singer Robyn, but her music is far more delicate. Rather than borrow from Europop or modern R&B, the stark, minimalist tunes on Li's debut EP (produced by Björn Yttling of Peter, Bjorn and John) are built upon the clack and clang of acoustic percussion and little else, aside from occasional bits of guitar or saxophone. The songs sound exceptionally intimate, to the point where it's easy to feel voyeuristic when listening on the title cut to her unguarded declaration of love. **MATTHEW PERPETUA**

Aimee Mann
@%#& Smilers ★★½

SUPEREGO

Queen of arid introversion welcomes extroverted hooks

Midway through another nuanced collection of mid-tempo '70s-pop-referencing tunes that document the lives of folks who manage only fleeting moments of happiness between protracted stretches of frustration, this L.A.-based veteran songwriter runs head-on into what she typically approaches sideways. "I thought my life would be better by now," she sighs over an anxious keyboard riff in "Thirty One Today," a song about getting older (but not wiser) that's so simple and catchy and scarily true that it opens an ordinarily shut door into Mann's dimly lit, astutely rendered world. **BARRY WALTERS**



Ladytron: The Elks Club was a poor choice for a record-release party.

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Mates of State Re-Arrange Us ★★★★★

BARBARA

Indie-pop couple calm down
and compose masterpiece

These proud parents ditched their old-timey organ, and with it much of the band's hyperactive, carnivalesque vibe. About time, too: Adorned with piano and synth, the ten songs on *Re-Arrange Us* are fuller, more elegant vessels for the duo's warm, intricate melodies. They've found a way to stay joyous while singing about married neuroses and thirty-something regret: Don't be shocked if the album's thesis—"Love loud / Don't lose loud"—

shows up in hipster wedding vows. **SPENCER KORNBÄRER**

Midnight Juggernauts Dystopia ★★★

ASTRALWERKS

Glammy rave-pop rockers
energetically ham it up

On this Aussie trio's debut, the best bits, like the fuzzy, organ-driven "Ending of an Era," with its deadpan vocals and feedback guitar, or "Into the Galaxy," with its melodic bass line, falsetto, and baroque synths, smartly channel Jeff Lynne's cosmicpop confections, a good model for how to fold dance music back into rock. Dimmer moments,

like the title track, overdo the Major Tom-on-E shtick, while "Road to Recovery" and "Nine Lives" sound like Justice if those dudes played "real" instruments. (Unsurprisingly, the French duo are big fans.) Once the annoying vocoder-rock of "Tombstone" kicks in, you remember that all dystopias start out with the best intentions. **J. GABRIEL BOYLAN**

Alanis Morissette

Flavors of
Entanglement ★★½

MAVERICK/REISE

Irony-challenged '90s icon
struggles with lexicon of love
Even on her sixth studio album,
Alanis Morissette's lyrics still



Old 97's: Those checks from *The Break-Up* pay for a lot of Pampers.

cause you to pause. Did she just sing, "How you land in the soft as you fortify"? Or "Core, born into form, starts in our living room"? Psychology textbooks are less linguistically challenged and just as littered with cases of emotional breakdown. Producer and cowriter Guy Sigsworth (Björk) kicks up the beats per minute with tabla ("Citizen of the Planet"), squeezes out a syrupy greeting-card moment ("Torch"), points up a likable melody ("Giggling Again for No Reason"), and layers Morissette's vocals for widescreen effect. But nothing can hide her tortured grammar or soul. **ROB O'CONNOR**

Mr. Gnome

Deliver This
Creature ★★½

EL MARIIO

Cleveland duo gives feminine
nuance to prog-rock complexity

If it weren't for the willful, overweening weirdness that's apparently required of every proggy pop-metal album (see Coheed and Cambria, System of a Down), this record probably wouldn't have been made already. But it's approach was just too powerfully obvious. Why not give heavy, down-tuned, open-string riffs the unadorned beauty and poise to match the glittering production? This duo's debut full-length balances a soulful, feminine power that recalls Scout Niblett and a drummer who coldly demands dynamic shifts with almost electronic precision. It's an earnest tug-of-war. **JASON SIMMS**

Mudhoney

The Lucky Ones ★★½

SUB POP

Like the Ramones, but with
seasonal affection disorder
Seattle's G-word forebears must
get a special kick out of releasing
a 20th-anniversary reissue
of their debut EP, *Superfuzz*

Bigmuff, alongside an eighth full-length that so brazenly resembles it. The bedrock combination of redlined guitars and Mark Arm's adenoidal wail has only been rendered more caustic by two decades of watching lesser lights cash in and burn out; Mudhoney were grumpy old men by 25, but now the curmudgeonliness feels earned. The title track's refrain—"The lucky ones are lucky they're not around"—could refer to compatriots who didn't make it out of the '90s gold rush alive, but it would be a slight to assume their punview is limited to a rock-scene requiem. **STEVE KANDELL**

The Netwist

The Devil, You + Me ★★½

DOMINO

Beautifully pensive musings
skitter across a somber surface

On their sixth album, these ever-evolving German indie rockers stick with the electronic-tinged direction of 2003's *Neon Golden*, but with a little less emotional heft. Which is not to say that they ever push the happiness meter past "litterweave." On "Where in the World," shivering, insectile strings give way to the thump of a synthetic heartbeat, the eerily blank voice of singer/guitarist Markus Aicher, and more-humanizing elements like horns and bells. Industrial clangs set a sinister tone for "On Planet Off," which is about as far as they stray from atmospheric melancholy. **LINSEY THOMAS**

Old 97's

Blame It on Gravity ★★½

NEW WEST

Despite real-world intrusions,
twangy finds find pop spark

With growing families, solo albums, label changes, and geographical barriers (two main members living on opposite coasts), should Old 97's even exist in 2008, never mind be



Always ready to
attend Diddy's
"White Party"

Glorious Nosebleeds

Canadian raconteur sees life in the face of death

Islands

Arm's Way ★★★★★

ANT1

A lot of indie-pop bands catch flak for making sickly-sweet songs, but Islands have a different vice: the sweetly sick. Since the early 2000s, Nick Thorburn has been penning morbidly sunny-sounding anthems—first as a member of the brilliant broken-pop trio the Unicorns, then on Islands' apocalyptically catchy 2006 debut, *Return to the Sea*. But with this follow-up, Thorburn eclipses his past work in terms

of gore per minute: From hemorrhages to hangings, nearly every track highlights some terrible way to die.

Luckily, there's a method to his misanthropy: Arm's Way is an album of quick changes, rescues, and escapes, equating

Nearly every track
highlights some
terrible way to die.

the shock of death with the shock of realizing that you're alive. On "Abominable Snow," Thorburn meets a yeti and then observes, dumfounded and ecstatic, "yet I didn't die." Omnivorous genre-picking—

metal riffs on "The Arm," new-wave rhythms on "Creeper"—and jubilant folk-boogie breakdowns are the soundtrack to Thorburn's epiphanies. While *Return to the Sea* achieved a sort of sparkling infectiousness, Arm's Way strives for—and often reaches—prog grandeur.

A slew of languid, lengthy tracks at the album's center almost kill the buzz. But whenever it seems that Islands are losing you, Arm's Way coughs up a moment so beautiful it might make your heart swell and burst into a bloody, disgusting mess. Thorburn would love nothing more. **SPENCER KORNBÄRER**

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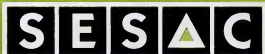
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this focused? Their seventh studio album bucks and chugs, balancing the quartet's original all-country impetus with Rhett Miller's love of power pop. "The Easy Way" trims hooks and harmonies from "Last Train to Clarksville"; "She Loves the Sunset" pays tribute to Jonathan Richman's romantic innocence; and bassist Murry Hammond's two contributions, especially the somber "Color of a Lonely Heart," celebrate the band's road-tested all-for-one chemistry. **ROB O'CONNOR**

Orchestra Baobab Made in Dakar ★★★★★

WORLD CIRCUMJONESUCH

African sophisticates rev up their groove machine once more

Since re-forming for the 2002 comeback *Specialist in All Styles*, this '70s/'80s Senegalese band, like elder rockers Mission of Burma and R.E.M., remain incandescent and relevant a second time around. Revisiting tunes from nights spent in steamy Dakar dance clubs, Baobab's merry but unhurried music braids high life with Cuban-flecked rumba ("Aline") and American soul jazz ("Colette"), while updating the griot of "Ndieling Ndieling" with barbed guitar. Whether the songs are rendered in Malinke, Wolof, Portuguese, or French, Baobab perpetually plays songs of love for their wives ("Nijay"), their country ("Cabral"), and beyond words, music herself. **ANDY BETA**

Robert Pollard Robert Pollard Is Off to Business ★★★★★

GUIDED BY VOICES INC.

Indie-rock boss names himself first employee of the month If it's Tuesday, it must be time for another Robert Pollard record. The twist with his latest—the man's third long-player in less than a year—is that it appears on Pollard's own Guided by Voices Inc. imprint. But despite the invocation of those crusty legends, *Business* is no lo-fi throwback. "The Blondes" opens with elegantly strummed acoustic guitar before shifting to regal, synth-backed verses and precisely played lead lines. And if the wah-wah riff that powers the crunchy "Graftification to Concrete" sounds like an indie in-joke, the track's ecstatic chorus legitimately conjures ELO at their high-gloss best. **SHANNON ZIMMERMAN**

Shearwater Rook ★★★★★

MATADOR

Sensitive Texans aren't quite as fragile as they appear

No longer a cloistered chamber-folk band, Shearwater follows the startling variety of 2006's *Palo Santo* with their even more stimulating fifth album. While Jonathan Meiburg's uneasy high quaver has always generated the kind of slimmer intensity that made Jeff Buckley so gripping

and unnerving, canny tonal shifts give his introspective songs a bristling, heightened urgency. Following the banging rocker "Century Eyes," on which Meiburg shouts, "Will I be the last to survive?" as if he's genuinely unghinged, the hazy delicacy of "I Was a Cloud" feels almost scary, rather than peaceful. **JON YOUNG**

Shy Child

Noise Won't Stop ★★★★★

KILL ROCK STARS

Apparently, electroclash is still a feasible career move

Before they formed New York's Shy Child, Pete Cafarella and Nate Smith helped funk up

the Washington, D.C. punk scene as members of Dischord band El Guapo (which splintered into the even more groove-oriented Supersystem), an experience that convinced them that beats designed for the dance floor should hit just as hard as those intended for moshing. With production help from Paul Epworth (Bloc Party, the Rapture, Kate Nash), the agro-disco jams here, driven by Cafarella's keytar, stay true to Noise Won't Stop's title, pulsing and thrashing with a barely controlled fury. Even when the twosome slow things down, as on "What's It Feel Like?" they keep the energy cranked. **MIKAEL WOOD**

We Are Scientists Brain Thrust Mastery ★★★★★

ADAPTOCHES

Headless party-crashers get the inevitable pop hangover

The title of the second LP by this Brooklyn synth-rock duo (formerly a trio) loosely alludes to singer Keith Murray's newly discreet, mind-over-body m.o. On 2006's flashy major-label debut *With Love and Squalor*—a surprise gold-seller in England—Murray boozed until he blacked out and invited ladies to use and abuse his body. But on the glibby rave-ups here, he's hesitant, intoning

Dance the Pain Away

Brooklyn beatmaker conducts a dance floor requiem

Hercules and Love Affair

Hercules and Love Affair ★★★★★

MUTE/DFA

Di/producer Andrew Butler mixes the poetic Apollonian aspects of queer culture with the Dionysian party represented by left-field disco and hypnotic early house, and crafts an unsettling masterpiece that yearns and chafes and ultimately pulls the rug from under your dancing feet. With production help from DFA's Tim Goldsworthy, Butler's debut album journeys

through dub music's bent past with both universal and timeless results that are as sensual and surreal as a Jean Cocteau film set to a Giorgio Moroder soundtrack.

The ghosts of Sylvester, Arthur Russell, Klaus Nomi,

Like a Jean Cocteau film set to a Giorgio Moroder soundtrack.

and countless other AIDS nightlife casualties act as guiding spirits through airy, elated early-morning grooves (the New Orleans gumbo of "Hercules Theme," the Muppets-inspired "True False/Fake Real") that eventually shift

into simmering, mid-tempo meditations. Drunken jazz horns and strutting bass lines heat up neon-cool electronics as Butler and other earthbound singers alternate with Antony Hegarty's otherworldly croon to fill the night with tender outcast prayers.

Like the troubled heroes of so many Greek tragedies, Hegarty looks to the stars for guidance on the album's quixotic peak, "Blind," but the answer is down below in a steady bass drum that suggests he's gotta keep moving, keep dancing. For we're all stars, as the Sylvester song once explained, and we will only happen once. **BARRY WALTERS**

Disco duo of Butler and Goldsworthy



MYSPACE GLOSSARY

BANDS >>

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My Morning Jacket, Evil Urges.....	mymorningjacket
Ellen Allen, Sool.....	ellenallenbpc
Animal Collective, Water Curses.....	animelcollectivetheland
The Bell Rays, Hard Sweet and Sticky.....	thebellrays
Black Angels, Directions to See a Ghost.....	theblackkengels
Blue Scholars, Butter&Gun\$.....	bluescholars
Bun B, It Trill.....	ibunbofun
T Bone Burnett, Tooth of Crime.....	tboneburnett
Li Meme, Voice of the Young People.....	lilmem
Kire Lynn Cain, The Ideal Hunter.....	kirelynncairn
CurumIn, JapanPopShow.....	curumIn
Cut Copy, In Ghost Colours.....	cutcopy
Kevin Devine, Put Your Ghosts to Rest.....	kevindevine
The Dresden Dolls, No, Virginie.....	dresdendolls
The Duke Spirit, Neptune.....	thedukespirit
Spiritualized, Songs in A&E.....	spiritualizedek
The Raconteurs, Consolers of the Lonely.....	theraconteurs
Jakob Dylan, Seeing Things.....	jakobdylan
Ecstatic Sunshine, Way.....	ecstaticsunshine
Elbow, The Seldom Seen Kid.....	elbowmusic
Fern Knight, Fern Knight.....	fernknight
Fleet Foxes, Fleet Foxes.....	fleetfoxes
Robert Forster, The Evangelist.....	thegobetweensmusic
French Kicks, Swimming.....	frenchkicks
Seen Garratt, Turbo 919.....	seengarrattmusic
Get Cape, Wear Cape, Fly.....	getcapewearcapefly
Searching for the Hows and Whys.....	reverendalgreen
Joan as Policewomen, To Survive.....	joanaspolicewomen
Santogold, Santogold.....	santogold
Scarlett Johansson, Anywhere I Lay My Head.....	scarlettjohansson
Kessin+2, Futurismo.....	kessinplus2
Ladytron, Velocifero.....	ladytron
Lykke Li, Little Bit EP.....	lykkel
Almee Mann, @#%&! Smilers.....	almeemann
Mates of State, Re-Arrange Us.....	matesofstate
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Alanis Morissette, Flevors of Entanglement.....	alanismorissette
Mr. Gnome, Deliver This Creature.....	mrgnome
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The Notwist, The Devil, You + Me.....	thenotwistnow
The Old 97s, Blame It on Gravity.....	theold97s
Islands, Arm's Way.....	islands
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SPIN FLASH

[1] Kimberly Miller
& Michael Holenska



330 Ritch Launch Party
San Francisco, CA

San Francisco's legendary 330 Ritch re-opened its doors after a two-month long renovation. The venue has a new look, thanks to its new owners, City Vision Entertainment. 330 Ritch also has new partners including OurCountryside, a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide a community library of musical instruments for kids.

330 Ritch owners and members of City Vision enjoyed cocktails and sets by DJ Scene and DJ Solomon.



[7] Jared Flint,
Steven Rojas,
Nicole Michalek
& Elliot David

22 Mile Island
New York, NY
March 7, 2008

Blessing and Dead Dumb & Blind Recordings presented 22 Mile Island, an event held at New York's 477 Loft. Attendees were treated to a video presentation of the Blessing Autumn/Winter 2008 Menswear Collection and the first New York City performance of Working For A Nuclear Free City.

WHO

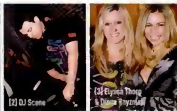
Artists, editors and photographers gathered to check out the latest fashion and music trends.



[8] Nate Flood,
Ryder Robison
& Dan DeLorenzo



[9] May Harding & Audrey Giergas



[5] Rachael Mann
& Trevor Hubbard



Letter Bomb

Sicko satire by "worst" director is better than you'd think

Postal ★★★ ZACK WARD, DAVE FOLEY EVENTFILM, R

Popularly regarded as the worst director alive, Uwe Boll worked his way to infamy with an oeuvre heavy with such brain-dead video-game adaptations as *House of the Dead* and *Alone in the Dark*. Having avoided much of his work in the belief that watching it would make me dumber, I can't tell whether his latest—inspired by the first-person shooter of the same name—marks a departure from form, but it's obviously the product of a man who's not gonna take it anymore. Like a scuzzbucket version of Jean-Luc Godard's *Week End*, *Postal* rocks along angrily—as a politically engaged stoner film, a terminally bitter shoot-'em-up, and an excitingly offensive take on cultural apocalypse.

Our hero is the unemployed Postal Dude (Ward), a nice enough guy living in the hellish town of Postal. Discouraged after an awkward job interview, he drops in on his Uncle Dave (Foley), a phony guru running a religious commune who's mostly in it for the chicks. In trouble with the IRS, Dave asks for his nephew's assistance in stealing crates of the coveted Krochty Doll—imagine a Tickle Me Elmo shaped like a penis. The plan hits a snag only because Islamic extremists—including

a huffy Osama bin Laden, seen diligently taking notes at a management-training seminar—also want to boost the toys. A counterterrorism plan hatched by one of Dave's lackeys involves kidnapping Verne "Mini-Me" Troyer, who, playing himself, cannot fight off the many thousands of monkeys eventually encouraged to rape him.

The second half of *Postal* unfolds thoughtfully,

Uwe Boll attacks a rumor about the financing of this schlock with a gag about concentration camps.

strange for a movie whose IMDb keywords include "head explosion," "group sex," "eating human flesh," "9/11 joke," and "Nazi." See also "director cameo" for that last one—the German Boll attacking a rumor about the financing of this schlock with a gag about concentration camps and gold fillings. Uncomfortable and clever, the moment points to what's best about the movie's scattershot satirizing of God and man and law and order. It's a gross-out comedy based on moral disgust.

The Promotion

★★★½

SEAN WILLIAM SCOTT,
JOHN C. REILLY

THIRD RAIL, R

Supermarket-set slapstick comedy stocks real laughs

Wannabe gangstas in the parking lot, deli staffers joking about cutting the cheese, backstabbing in Aisle 9—the hassles of a second-tier position at a chain supermarket have taken a toll on Doug (Scott), a Midwestern mensch. He's hoping to make manager at a new store so that he and the wife (The Office's Jenna Fischer) can move out of an apartment where they can hear their next-door neighbor incorporating the banjo into his sex life. Though his competition, Richard (Reilly), is a steadfast buffoon, he's also a formidable suck-up, and their jousting becomes a slapstick take on getting ahead. Though the presence of Fischer and SNL's Fred Armisen suggest that the movie's own ambitions would be best fulfilled on the small screen, director Steve Conrad manages to laugh at the characters, especially Reilly's pure-hearted loser, without sneering, giving spiritual weight to an amusing light farce.

Mongol

★★★

ALIYA, TIGEN AO

PICTUREHOUSE, R

Rugged Russian epic strives for *Gladiator* greatness

It's hard out there for a tribal chieftain: The world abounds with rivals who want to kidnap your wife, sell you into slavery, and burn your mom's house down. Such are the trials faced by the young Genghis Khan in a Russian-made biography tracing his growth from a bratty nine-year-old undermining plans for an arranged marriage to a father of two illegitimate children ready to conquer all



of Asia. *Mongol* churns along like an old-fashioned epic, with blood brothers becoming sworn enemies, horses forever charging over the awesome horizon, sound and image always ready to strong-arm you into appreciating capital-O Destiny. At a sluggish two hours, it perhaps features one or two smoldering oaths of revenge too many, but the battle scenes—*Gladiator*-aping blasts of splashy carnage—help pass the medieval time.

My Winnipeg

★★★★★

DARCY FERR, ANN SAVAGE

VS, NOT RATED

More homespun weirdness from cult Canuck filmmaker

In Guy Maddin's *The Saddest Music in the World*—the gorgeously strange 2003 musical starring Isabella Rossellini as a brewery owner whose prosthetic legs are made of glass and filled with beer—a newspaper voted Winnipeg, Manitoba, the "world capital of sorrow." Yet, going back home again in this pseudo documentary, the director makes the town seem less sad than beautifully eerie. His narration claims that Winnipeg has "ten times the sleepwalking rate of any city in the world," and the film glides along with a suitable dreaminess. Glances back at local history fade into winking reenactments of family life, and those bits of arch melodrama melt into gorgeous riffs about snow.



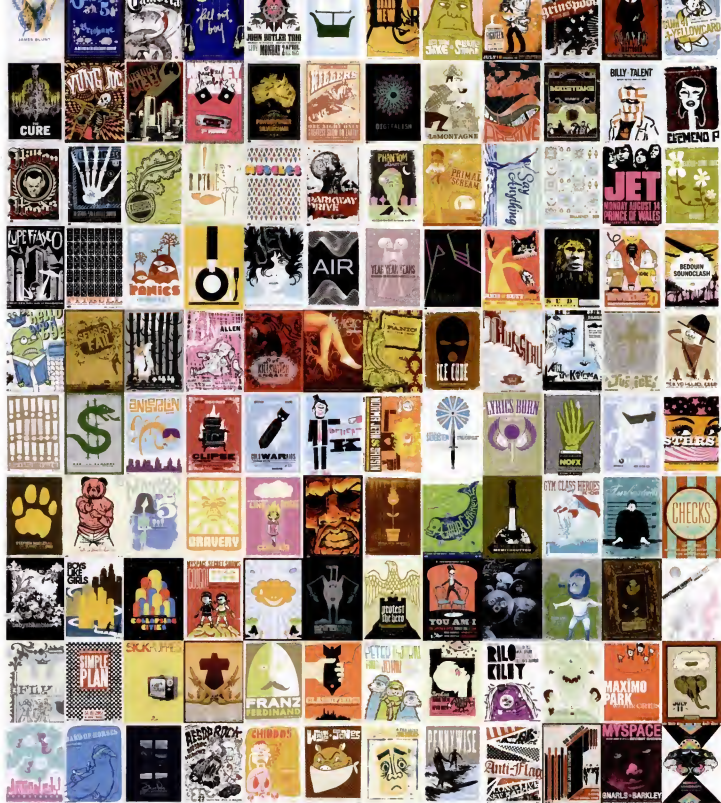
SPOTLIGHT ON THE MUSIC OF

The Promotion

Advancing the plot of *The Promotion*, the filmmakers rely both on tracks by current alternative acts (the Flaming Lips, Andrew Bird) and the grandiose arena rock of yesteryear. In a running gag at once goofy and poignant, John C. Reilly's schmuck of an assistant manager tries to self-help himself to success by listening to inspirational tapes that alternate hammy exhortations with soaring tunes. REO Speedwagon's "Time for Me to Fly" and the Steve Miller Band's "Fly Like an Eagle" take precedence as the joke keeps slipperin', slipperin', slipperin' into your ears.



Reilly and Scott vie for a Promotion.



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Natural
Bourne:
Killer!

Attack of the Return of the Summer Movie Games II

THE BEST NEW CINEMATIC TIE-INS DON'T STICK TOO CLOSE TO THEIR SILVER-SCREEN COUNTERPARTS

Americans already spend about as much on video games every year as they do going to the movies, but in a synergy-sucking twist, games based on movies have a reputation as shoddy marketing gimmicks, often lacking even the thin artistic merit of a hastily green-lit popcorn flick.

The most effective of this summer's crop of movie tie-ins also has the most tenuous connection to its source material. *Robert Ludlum's The Bourne Conspiracy* (★★½) mixes elements of all three Jason Bourne movies and Ludlum's books into a new story line, but arrives almost a year after Matt Damon's last turn as the tortured superspy. Damon himself is MIA, forcing the game to incorporate a bland virtual stand-in, but that actually helps keep it from being just another knockoff souvenir. It is largely successful, mixing frequent shoot-outs with brutal hand-to-hand combat that apes the film's extended martial arts beatdowns and shaky handheld camera work.

The comic-book movie genre is having a renaissance of sorts, with Robert Downey Jr.'s performance attracting raves for *Iron Man*, and a rebooted *Hulk* franchise capturing more of the escapist vibe of its source material than Ang Lee's morose 2003 take. These films' video game counterparts fall in to the same trap as the vast majority of movie-based titles—their DNA comes from a marketing plan, not a game designer, and both would be forgettable without their big-screen cachet. *Iron Man* (★★½) is a

traditional take on the movie tie-in, acting as a highlight reel for the film's action set pieces. Much of the film's A-list cast, including Downey and Terrence Howard (no Gwyneth, however) dutifully reprise their roles for voice-overs, but they're little more than window dressing as protagonist Tony Stark builds himself suits of high-powered armor and engages in overly familiar video game shoot-outs, blasting bad guys with ray guns and missiles. For a game aimed at mainstream movie fans, *Iron Man*'s biggest weakness is complex controls that make flying around in a suit of armor about as difficult as we'd imagine actually flying around in a suit of armor would be.

By contrast, *The Incredible Hulk* (★★½) is less slavishly devoted to the film that spawned it, and the original's roiled ragor tears through a city center, smashing everything in sight. Endless armies of robots, monsters, and soldiers eventually turn up to add some tedious cinematic structure, but being able to toss cars around like softballs never gets old.

The head of a game development company recently let us in on why movie games are so frequently mediocre: DVDs, soundtrack albums, and foreign sales all support a film's bottom line, while a companion video game only makes money from retail sales, so less time and money are allocated. Fortunately, not every movie-inspired game is the victim of such cynical accounting, and some standouts, from *Bourne* to *Lego Star Wars*, may well be as deserving of tricked-out collector's edition box sets as their big-screen siblings. **DAN ACKERMAN**

THE ENVELOPE, PLEASE...

Presenting the best and worst movie-related games

BEST GAME BASED ON A MOVIE FRANCHISE NO ONE REALLY CARES ABOUT



The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay

2004, VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
Better than the Vin Diesel vehicle *The Chronicles of Riddick* and possibly its predecessor, *Pitch Black*, *Butcher Bay* has eye-popping graphics and a decent script. A standout for the original Xbox.

BEST MOVIE GAME FEATURING A CAST THAT'S PROBABLY NEVER PLAYED A VIDEO GAME



The Godfather

2006, EA
Featuring voice-overs from many of the surviving principal actors from the 1972 movie cast (including Abe Vigoda, but minus Al Pacino), this above-average *Grand Theft Auto* knockoff earns a footnote for being one of Marlon Brando's last-ever acting gigs.

WORST MOVIE GAME YOU'LL KEEP PLAYING JUST TO SEE GIRLS FIGHTING



Charlie's Angels

2003, LARSEN
The film's cast is re-created as stiff-acting robotic automatons (insert Lucy Liu joke here) in a game that manages to be both ugly and boring, thanks to rudimentary controls, repetitive fights against brain-dead bad guys, and low-budget graphics.

WORST MOVIE GAME THAT MADE A MISTAKE



Enter the Matrix

2003, ATARI
Proving that reviews don't sell games, more than three million people bought this piece of junk, which turned the inventive world of *The Matrix* into a generic action brawler devoid of the high-flying stunts from the films. Worse, the movies' heroes make only cameo, deferring to a virtual Jada Pinkett Smith. **D.A.**



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"VEERS INTO THE WILDLY SURREAL"
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TV THAT'S PLUGGED IN



Put your back into it: Mary J. and Jay-Z feel the burn.

The First Family

President Carter and Queen Mary reassert their power BY EVELYN McDONNELL

MARCH 22, 2008
AMERICAN AIRLINES ARENA, MIAMI

Fair exchange, no robbery: You paid a lot of money, and we've got a lot of songs," Jay-Z assured the sold-out crowd.

The man whose nickname is a derivative of Jehovah wasn't idly boasting, either. At the Miami launch of their *Heart of the City* tour, Shawn Carter and Mary J. Blige delivered hit-crammed, cameo-studded sets, as if their careers hung in the balance.

Perhaps more than any other rapper of his generation, Hova has honed his live act, and his Madison Square Garden "swan song" in 2003 enshrined him as a capital-A artist. He always thinks in terms of events—hence the classy big-band stage setup and top-shelf guests: Kanye West, Timbaland, Young Jeezy. The three tiers on which the coheadliners made their entrance together showcased 22 musicians, including eight string players and four horns. Footage of New

York at night filled a giant screen; later, there were images of clouds, glaciers, and urban blight. But aside from a few dancers during Blige's set and some fireworks, that was it. No lip-synching while flying from a trapeze, multiple costume changes, or hype men: Singing and rapping were the heart of this city.

They started together with his "Can't Knock the Hustle," he came back for her "Real Love," and then Blige played hit after hit with scarcely a pause, like a preacher on a mission; increasingly, she's as much gospel as R&B singer. She sang so forcefully, sweat streamed like tears and she lost an earring. Stomping and swaying and kneeling and jumping, Blige worked it hard for 75 minutes. With the string players quickly replaced by a turntablist, Jay-Z came out rapping "Say Hello" from *American Gangster*. He too performed like a track star, spitting words breathlessly, stopping briefly beneath an image of George W. Bush, asking, "Ready for a change?" When a picture of Barack

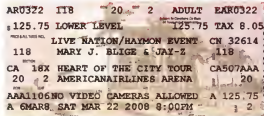
Obama appeared, the crowd roared.

In some ways, the two veterans are polar opposites: Since she proclaimed "No More Drama" in 2001, Blige has been singing affirmations, yet she digs deepest when expelling her pain. Jay is always trying to prove how serious he is, when really it's his downish showmanship that's endearing. At this point, it's a bit silly for this multimillionaire exec to be playing the street hustler; and too many

songs from *American Gangster* slowed the momentum.

The show ended with the rather anticlimactic encore duet "Heart of the City (Ain't No Love)," from Jay's 2001 classic *The Blueprint*. And even though both icons are in decline on the pop charts, this tour proves they still have long legs as live performers—vital in the digital era. For one night, on star power alone, they seemed ageless.

Blige sang so forcefully, sweat streamed like tears and she lost an earring.



GRAD GIFT GUIDE



RADIOHEAD

The band's first ever career retrospective brings together the singles, key album tracks and fan favorites including "Creep," "Karma Police," "High & Dry," "Fake Plastic Trees," & "Optimistic." 2 disc Special Edition and Vinyl also available.



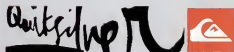
1997

May 27th welcomes the release of 1997's engaging folk meets pop album, *On The Run*. Available in good record stores everywhere.



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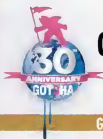
QUIKSILVER

After four decades of taking boardriders to new destinations, Quiksilver is recognizing the women who've been with them all along. On July 15th, Quiksilver launches their new collection for women. These are clothes for women who find their destinations by trying on all the options. www.quiksilver.com



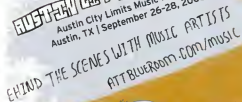
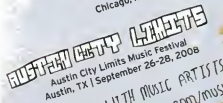
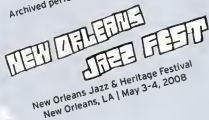
JVC

The stealthy El Kameleon DVD/CD Receiver from JVC Mobile Entertainment is iPod and Bluetooth compatible, with a 3.5" monitor and USB rear cable included. Proximity sensor turns the unit on with the wave of a hand.



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New Orleans ROCK CITY

After Katrina, New Orleans sounded different: The indie rockers dispersed. Lil Wayne and Juvenile ended up in Miami and ATL. R&B icons Allen Toussaint and Aaron Neville moved to New York City and Nashville, respectively. But slowly, many musicians have returned. Hokey as it sounds, they're back because the culture here is too important to let die. Check out what's mentioned below and you'll see why.

LOCAL HEROES

R&B journeyman Ernie K-Doe ("Mother-in-Law," "Here Come the Girls") became cool for a second time in 1994 when he and his wife, Antoinette K-Doe, opened the Mother-in-Law Lounge, a popular, comfortably divesy hangout. Since Ernie's 2001 passing, Mrs. K-Doe has helped support the music scene by hosting concerts and cooking red beans and rice for benefit shows.

As artistic director for Preservation Hall—the home of traditional jazz in New Orleans since the early 1960s—Ben Jaffe, 37, followed in his father Allan's footsteps. No fusty embalmer, the younger Jaffe jolts jazz tradition by inviting unlikely

musicians such as Sun Ra sideman Carl LeBlanc and spiky-haired punk crooner Clint Meaden to play, traditionalists be damned.

Dr. Ike and the Mystic Knights stage the Ponderosa Stomp, an annual cavalcade of theumping heroes of rock'n'roll (this year's performers included Roky Erickson and the Shangri-Las' Mary Weiss). When he can, Dr. Ike, a 43-year-old crate-digging anesthesiologist, pairs his heroes with younger artists who are also fans, resulting in a fiery bridging of the generation gap.

Formerly the director of New Orleans Musicians' Hurricane Relief Fund, **Jordan Hirsch** now heads Sweet Home New Orleans, a coalition of charities working to find appropriate housing solutions for displaced musicians. When visiting luminaries such as the Edge, Tom Morello, and Steve Earle want the disaster tour, Hirsch is the one who shows them around.

Juvenile and Mannie Fresh may have popularized bounce—the call-and-response hip-hop strain unique to New Orleans—but **DI Jubilee** was its forerunner, releasing albums when Lil Wayne was still knee-high to a crawfish. Jubilee is also known for encouraging the rump-heavy dance moves that let him lay claim to the phrase "Back that ass up."

BARS AND CLUBS



Lil Wayne at One Eyed Jacks

One Eyed Jacks

615 TOULOUSE ST., 504-568-8361

From the deep-red bordello-style wallpaper to the heavily tattooed staff, decadence rules in this French Quarter den of iniquity. The licentiousness even extends to the booking, which skews to homegrown hard rockers like Supagroup and Rock City Morgue and raunchy visitors like Turbonegro and the Black Lips.

The Saint

961 ST. MARY ST., 504-523-0050

This bar ain't pretty, but it's homey, which is a bit of a surprise, considering it's co-owned by Rock City Morgue's Sean Yseult and her hubby, Chris Lee of Supagroup. Yseult stocked the jukebox, and her tastes are broader than you'd expect. On Wednesday nights, Lee hosts a variety show featuring sketch comedy and mock interviews.

Tipitina's

501 NAPOLEON AVE., 504-885-8477

This Uptown mainstay is both the spiritual home of New Orleans funk and R&B, and the main fundraising arm for its namesake foundation, which puts instruments in the hands of needy music students. Bands looking to help have been approaching Tipitina's to play; Wilco recently headlined two shows.

d.b.a.

618 FRENCHMEN ST., 504-942-3731

Half watering hole for discerning drinkers, half live music venue, d.b.a. presents everything from Grammy-nominated Cajuns the Pine Leaf Boys to jazz improv with drum legend Johnny Vidacovich. Score a front window booth and people-watch on Frenchmen, the Bourbon Street for those who prefer funky beats over plastic beads.

Saturn Bar

3067 ST. CLAUDE AVE., 504-949-7532

With art on the walls and a jukebox full of old country and R&B, this bar was once beautifully disheveled. By the late 1990s, "beautiful" no longer applied. But after the 2005 death of former owner O'Neil Brodyard, his family renovated, helping the place reclaim its offbeat charm, which is echoed by the bands that play here.

KNOW YOUR HISTORY

The birthplace of hits by Little Richard and Fats Domino, Cosimo Matassa's **J&M Studios** first found a home on Rampart Street—before it was replaced by a law-themed Laundromat. In the mid-'50s, J&M moved to another French Quarter spot, where, in a building now owned by Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, it played host to Dr. John, the Meters, and Allen Toussaint.





Quintron and Miss Pussycat

QUINTRONANDMISSPUSSYCAT.COM

In a city full of quirks, Quintron and his wife, puppeteer Miss Pussycat, have to be considered among the quirkiest. To wit: Quintron invented the Drum Buddy, a light-activated rhythm machine capped by a coffee can that he plays while accompanying himself on an organ adorned with a grille and headlights. Live, the pair are no joke as they work up a punk-funk party.



BANDS

The Happy Talk Band

MYSACE.COM/THEHAPPYTALKBAND

Without ever descending into easy melodrama, Luke Allen and a revolving cast of simpatico musicians get together to make grimly funny country rock populated by people harboring downsize dreams and death wishes. Live, his punk roots show in all their boozy, ragged glory. When Allen isn't making music, he's tending bar, so you can guess where some of his stories come from.

The Soul Rebels

MYSACE.COM/SOULREBELSBASSBAND

With a sturdy backbone of horns and drums, New Orleans' brass bands have long merged jazz and funk. Young upstarts the Soul Rebels throw some hip-hop spice into the mix with the addition of a DJ and a reliance on heavy breakbeats. And despite the fact that some of the band's members commute from Houston, the Soul Rebels' funk remains uncut. You can catch them every Thursday night at Le Bon Temps Roule.

Why Are We Building Such a Big Ship?

MYSACE.COM/WHYAREWEBUILDINGSUCHABIGSHIP

Many different strains of street music came crashing together in the sound of this riotous and richly dramatic collective in which everyone—including the accordion player—sounds self-taught. You can hear the band's love for Tom Waits in every lurch and bounce of their soulful junkyard sprawl.

Rotary Downs

ROTARYDOWNS.COM

Rotary Downs owed an early debt to Pavement, but as the band added trumpet, pedal steel, and keyboards, their music began to make such simple comparisons sound silly. Filled with viral melodies and roller-coaster dynamics, the band's style is now wholly its own. On the new album *Choirned* to the Chorio!, lead singer James Marler even manages the difficult feat of sounding simultaneously cynical and openhearted.

BY ALEX RAWLS



Officially the B.W. Cooper Apartments, the **Calliope** (pronounced "Co-ee-ope") Projects were once home to the Neville Brothers, Master P, and C-Murder. But like the rest of the city's public housing projects, which were shuttered after Hurricane Katrina (regardless of their condition), Calliope is now empty, its residents never allowed back to reclaim their belongings.



As with so many other port towns, the Crescent City is no stranger to heroin. Thus, any scorecard of bad ideas must include former New York Dolls guitarist **Johnny Thunders** moving to New Orleans to kick junk. In April 1991. Shortly after renting a room, Thunders was found dead at the French Quarter's St. Peter House Hotel, reportedly of drug-related causes.

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I Dream of Keith

How James Brown and Chuck Berry made my Rolling Stones fantasy a reality. Almost.

BY MIKE EDISON

The last time I had drinks with Keith Richards was at the Apollo Theater, 20 years ago. James Brown was playing, uncharacteristically slogging through his set.

It was not a good time for the Godfather of Soul. He was coming off of an angel dust binge, an interstate car chase, and assault and weapons charges. He was facing a six-year stretch, and already he was dragging the mic stand around like an inmate with a mop. I decided to go out to the lobby

to have a smoke. Keith, apparently, had the same idea. He was by himself, back against the wall, communing with a cigarette and a glass of whiskey.

Meeting Keith was not without kismet: I had just seen him on the big screen, celebrating Chuck Berry in *Hail! Hail! Rock 'n' Roll*, the concert film he'd helped produce and played a principal role in. But I didn't dig it: The band was overpopulated with bloated Stones sidemen, too slick by half, and pockmarked with cameos by somnolent classic-rock dinosaurs. The toughest numbers exhibited the ferocity of fabric softener. It was a flabby affair all around, and pretty obvious that Chuck didn't even want to be there.

In the lobby of the Apollo, Keith looked good. Maybe a little drunk. I certainly was. He was very relaxed. His eyeliner was applied flawlessly. Later someone told me that he had it tattooed on so it wouldn't smear.

Unfortunately, my earnest desire to know exactly what precipitated the disaster of a film came out more like, "Dude, what the fuck were you thinking? The whole movie sounded horrible."

Keith leaned forward. Suddenly he looked a lot like the Ancient Mariner must have to Coleridge in his most vivid opium dream.

"Chuck is a motherfucker," he told me, eyes glittering. "I love the guy, but he is impossible to work with. You want a drink?"

I walked over to the bar with Keith. I gave him a Marlboro, and we talked some more about Chuck Berry and James Brown, agreeing that this was not James' best night. Keith shrugged, as if to say he loved James but he was a motherfucker, too.

We smoked and drank Jack Daniel's for a while before a handful of people drifted out into the lobby and recognized him. It did not help that the guy selling crappy James Brown souvenir T-shirts started yelling, "It's the Rolling Stones! It's him! The Rolling Stones!"

Keith told me he had to get going, and we shook hands. What a gentleman. There I went and insulted him, and his reaction was to buy me a drink. Which reinforced the recurring Rolling Stones dream I have had since high school, in which Keith is always perfect, and Mick is invariably a dick.

In the Dream, it is never cool Mick, circa 1972. It is never the Mick who loved Little Walter so much that he decided to quit business school to learn to blow harp like him, or the Satan-sympathizing Mick who was born in a cross-fire hurricane and likes his blues sloppy and dirty, or who wants to stay up all night talking

about French existentialism and dabbling in newfangled designer drugs. No, it is always the Mick who thinks he looks dashing in pastel track suits and that it is somehow important to do duets with Christina Aguilera and Axl Rose, and he dismisses me like a spoiled princess. Keith ignores him and motions me over to a set of drums.

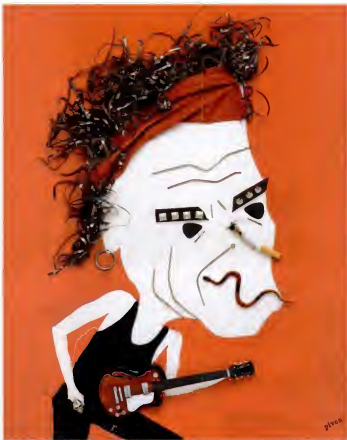
I feel guilty because Charlie isn't around. I love Charlie and don't want to sit in without his permission. Keith tells me it's okay, just have fun, but somehow I always wake up before we start to play.

None of the other Stones are ever in the Dream, although in real life I once stood next to Ron Wood at the taping of a Jerry Lee Lewis television special, which was plenty weird enough. Ronnie is about five feet tall and looks like a cross between a cartoon magpie and my Grandma Florence. When it was his turn to get onstage, he promptly forgot the words to the song he was supposed to sing and opted instead to mug ineffectively with a borrowed Stratocaster. It makes sense that if he can't even get it up to sing with Jerry Lee Lewis, then he certainly has no business percolating in my subconscious.

But my friend Keith is a man of the people; he is pure of spirit and still believes that in old-time rock'n'roll,

there is salvation, and he would never take his fans or, God forbid, the Killer, for granted. In the Dream he is nice as pie and gives me his phone number and tells me to call him, and I know he is being sincere. I always wake up confident that Keith and I are real pals, and someday I am going to go over to his house and am finally going to get to jam with him on "Starfucker." ☼

Mike Edison has played drums with GG Allin, Jon Spencer, and the Raunch Hands, but never the Rolling Stones. He is the author of *I Have Fun Everywhere I Go: Savage Tales of Pot, Pornography, Punk Rock, Pro Wrestling, Talking Apes, Dirty Blues, Evil Bosses and the World's Most Notorious Magazines (Faber & Faber)*.



ROBERT LUDLUM'S

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PLAYSTATION 3



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